

## Brill's Companion to the Reception of Aeschylus

# Brill's Companions to Classical Reception

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# Brill's Companion to the Reception of Aeschylus

*Edited by*

Rebecca Futo Kennedy



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*Philip Watts (1961–2014).* I found Phil, a well-known French literature and film scholar at Columbia, while playing around in Google Scholar. There, I came upon an article titled “Aeschylus Soup” (2008, *Contemporary French Civilization* 32: 113–132) on French New Wave cinema, which I immediately fell in love with. I contacted him and, it turned out, he was beginning a new project that would take him back to Aeschylus and ancient tragedy and its persistence in postwar French literature and film. He was excited to write a chapter for this volume. Sadly, it was not completed at the time of his passing, though he did complete and publish a broader examination of tragic forms as “Remnants of Tragedy” (2012, *Yale French Studies* 121: 155–68). I encourage you all to read both.

Others without whom this volume would not have been completed are: Kyriakos Demetriou, for inviting me to create the volume; the editorial team at Brill, whose patience has been a true godsend; Max Goldman and Elly Kennedy, my family; Sarah Baker, and Megan Hancock, my staff at the Denison Museum—thank you for your patience and understanding; and, Kim Coplin, Provost at Denison University, for your support.

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# List of Abbreviations

Csapo/Slater	E. Csapo and W. Slater, <i>The Context of Ancient Drama</i> . Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995.
<i>DFA</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>The Dramatic Festivals of Athens</i> . Second edn. revised by J. Gould and D. M. Lewis. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.
D-K	H. Diels and W. Kranz eds., <i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i> . 3 Vols. Berlin: Weidmann, 1956–1959, eight edn.
<i>FGrHist</i>	F. Jacoby ed., <i>Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker</i> . 14 Vols. Berlin, 1923–1930; Leiden, 1940–1958.
IG I <sup>3</sup>	D. M. Lewis and L. Jeffrey eds., <i>Inscriptiones Graecae I: Inscriptiones Atticae Euclidis anno anteriores</i> . Berlin, 1981. Third edn.
IG II <sup>2</sup>	J. Kirchner, ed., <i>Inscriptiones Graecae II: Inscriptiones Atticae Euclidis anno posteriores</i> , Berlin 1913–1940. Second edn.
Koster	W. J. W. Koster ed., <i>Prolegomena de comoedia</i> . Groningen: Bouma, 1975.
<i>PA</i>	J. Kirchner, <i>Prosopographia Attica</i> . 2 vols. Berlin, 1901–1903.
<i>PCG</i>	R. Kassel and C. Austin eds., <i>Poetae Comici Graeci</i> . 8 Vols. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1983–2001.
<i>PCGF</i>	A. Meineke, <i>Poetarum Comicorum Graecorum Fragmenta</i> . Paris: Didot, 1855.
<i>TrGF</i> <sub>1</sub>	R. Kannicht and B. Snell eds., <i>Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta</i> . Vol. 1. Göttingen, 1986. Second edn.
<i>TrGF</i> <sub>3</sub>	S. Radt ed., <i>Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta: Aeschylus</i> . Vol. 3. Göttingen: de Gruyter, 1985.
<i>TrGF</i> <sub>5.1</sub>	R. Kannicht ed. <i>Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta: Euripides</i> . Vol. 5.1 Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. 2004.

Note: All abbreviations for ancient authors and texts follow those found in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2012. Fourth edn.

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# Introduction: The Reception of Aeschylus

Rebecca Futo Kennedy

In recent years, there have been a number of books either focused on or including discussions of various receptions of Aeschylus on stage.<sup>1</sup> Given the rich modern production history of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, especially, but also *Persians*, this should be no surprise.<sup>2</sup> But Aeschylus' reception is much broader than its re-performance on the stage and this volume seeks to explore some of those spaces that have not been as widely discussed, such as Aeschylus' reception in political philosophy, film, literature,<sup>3</sup> in translation, and as school texts.<sup>4</sup> This is not a comprehensive volume—such a thing would fill thousands of pages—nor is it structured to give an overview of the reception of individual plays—there are only seven, if *Prometheus Bound* is included (as it is here). Instead, this volume offers a combination of explorations of receptions and acts of reception. The idea behind it is to provide some insights into the myriad ways that Aeschylus has been received into the world since his first productions in the early 5th century BCE. Ideally, the chapters here included will inspire thoughts of other receptions of Aeschylus and perhaps even further acts.

One of the key elements to understanding the reception of Aeschylus is to understand that it is not just his plays that have a reception—the figure of Aeschylus himself does as well. Thus, this introduction does not include a “life of Aeschylus” section as might be expected in such a volume. Rather, various

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1 See, for example, Macintosh, Michelakis, Hall, and Taplin 2005, as well as chapters by Hall and Van Steen in Bridges, Hall, and Rhodes 2007, and various chapters in Hall, Macintosh, and Wrigley 2004. Books in the Duckworth Companions series on individual plays also contain chapters on the reception of those plays.

2 The Oxford Archive of Performance of Greek and Roman Drama Database (<http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/>) is an invaluable catalog for reception on the stage.

3 Aeschylus features or appears in numerous chapters in Vance and Wallace, most prominently in Chapters 11 (Macintosh on re-performance), 13 (Mays on Coleridge), 15 (Webb on Byron), 17 (Hurst on Barrett Browning) 20 (Prins on R. Browning), and 24 (Pite on Hardy).

4 There is an excellent recent special issue of *Aevum Antiquum* NS 12–13 (2012–2013) edited by Maria Pia Pattoni on Prometheus (Prometeo) that includes essays on [Aeschylus'] *Prometheus*' reception from Roman to contemporary periods that includes reception in literature and philosophy. Also, Constantinidis 2016 focuses not only on stage productions, but translation. The chapters by Hanink and Uhlig gives an overview of material that serves as the subject for the first half of this book.

chapters, particularly those that deal with Aeschylus in antiquity, address the constructedness of Aeschylus the poet and person as part of his reception.

The contributions to the volume are divided into two parts, Pre-Modern and Modern, and in general chronological order within each section. Part I, Pre-Modern Receptions, begins with Aeschylus in Sicily (David Smith), a reception that began in his own lifetime, and then returns to Athens to meet Aeschylus as he appeared on the comic stage (David Rosenbloom). Dana Munteanu next takes up the issue of Aristotle's reception of Aeschylus and contests the often assumed position that he did not care much for the playwright. The fourth chapter takes us into the Hellenistic period (Sebastiana Nervegna), while George Harrison argues in the fifth chapter that Aeschylus was not present in Rome until the imperial period and was predominantly so in the eastern half of the empire. This section ends with Christos Simelidis' examination of Aeschylus as a Byzantine school text.

Part II of the book examines a variety of receptions in the modern period, starting, roughly, at the end of the 18th century. This is not to say that Aeschylus was not read in the period between the fall of Byzantium and then, just that we see a steep increase in interest in Aeschylus beginning around 1800. Michael Ewans begins this section with a look at the adaptation of Aeschylus in opera starting in 1744. We then travel to Germany, where Theodore Ziolkowski explores the rich reception of Aeschylus beginning at the end of the Enlightenment as the Sturm und Drang (Storm and Stress) movement takes hold in the 1770s. Gonda Van Steen next explores one of the earliest reception of Aeschylus' *Persians* in Ottoman Greece.

The next three chapters examine receptions of Aeschylus by the British, first of *Prometheus Bound* by the Shelleys—Percy Bysshe Shelley (Fabien Desset) and Mary Shelley (Ana González-Rivas Fernández)—and then by Thackeray of the *Oresteia* in the satirical *Vanity Fair* (Barbara Witucki). A very different reception of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* emerges in Richard Seaford's examination of Wagner's *Ring*, while satire and comedy reign once again in Patrick Murphy and Fred Porcheddu's discussion of two *Eumenides* parodies titled *The Newmenides*, student productions at Cambridge University produced in 1906–7 coinciding with the competition for the Regius Professorship in Greek of that year. This last essay moves us into the twentieth century, where Aeschylus' reception becomes more prevalent.

Beginning with Chapter 16, the volume spreads out into more variable receptions. Stratos Constantinidis' chapter stands apart from many of the others in examining the choices translators make to reduce Aeschylus' word repetitions and the impact this has on an audience's and performers' understanding of Aeschylus' dramaturgy when working only in English translation. He starts

from Broadhead's 1960 hypothesis that ancients "were much less sensitive to repetition than we moderns" and provides evidence from antiquity to the modern stage that such a dismissal misses the importance of such repetition. This chapter stands at the beginning of a set of essays dealing with receptions of Aeschylus at many removes from the original Greek—from French state propaganda in the Algerian War (Gabriel Sevilla) to British television productions for school children and the general public (Amanda Wrigley) to competing African *Oresteias* by Pasolini (1970) and Bamako (2006) (Tom Hawkins) and in South Africa (Kevin Wetmore). All of these adaptations of Aeschylus are mediated, often adaptations of adaptations, and do not depend on an audiences' knowledge of Greek or of ancient Athenian culture. The same may be said for some of the texts and plays discussed by Jacques Bromberg in Latin America from the end of the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries.

Chapters 22–23 take a turn to the more psychological aspects of Aeschylus' reception by examining contemporary approaches to adaptation or reception that focus on the rational and irrational in Aeschylus. In both Marianne MacDonald's discussion of O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra* and Herzog/Golder's *My Son, My Son, What Have Ye Done* and Geoff Bakewell's look at Kubrick's *The Shining*, we see the tensions and pressures Aeschylus wove into his plots and characters used to explore human minds as they breakdown. Next, Brett Rogers takes us millennia into the future and onto the distant planet of Dune where we see that some family curses last more than a few generations. Here, Aeschylus' tragedy provides the perfect mythical subtext to understanding the religious and political trajectory of House Atreides in Frank Herbert's most famous of science fiction novels, *Dune*.

The final two chapters turn to reception (or lack thereof) of Aeschylus in modern political thought. First, Arlene Saxonhouse returns us to both Aeschylus' plays and Aristophanes' Aeschylus to argue that changes in the field of political theory over the twentieth century require increased engagement with Aeschylus, mostly absent in the past, but now the one poet who might "save our city" as Aristophanes thought he might. Finally, Larissa Atkison and Ryan Balot examine a handful of scholars engaging political theory from a variety of disciplines today, as Saxonhouse encourages, who value Aeschylean tragedy to engage us deeply in debates about democratic ideals.

Overall, the hope with this volume on the reception of Aeschylus is that readers come away with some sense of the scope of Aeschylus' influence in the world. He has not been the most popular of the three great tragedians in the centuries after his death, but he has certainly been one of the most broadly used and influential, even if that influence goes unrecognized at times. Aeschylus has impacted not only the theatre, but literature, history, education,

political science, philosophy, the visual arts, political revolutions, colonial discourses, science fiction, and television and film. He has been also used to promote imperialism and liberal democracy as a founding father of the “West” in an eternal struggle with the culturally and politically “other” East<sup>5</sup> and, conversely, as an interrogator of these same triumphalist, militant receptions. But, always, he has been present, even if those using his ideas or stories have not realized that they were doing it. Ideally, readers of this volume will discover for themselves new ways to continue making use of and reflecting upon Aeschylus in the modern world. If any chapters in this volume encourage readers to look for more Aeschylus in the world around them, then we have done our duty.

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5 The undercurrent of this reception of Aeschylus is considered by Atkison and Balot in Chapter 24, though they do not engage explicitly with Edward Said's positioning of Aeschylus as a founding myth of the concept of the “West” and Orientalism. However, the idea of Aeschylus (and the Greeks generally) as the foundation of the East-West dichotomy is precarious, as discussed recently by Kwame Anthony Appiah in his Reith Lectures (transcripts and recordings are available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00729d9/episodes/player>). The episode titled “Culture” discusses the origins of the idea of western civilization in the Cold War in opposition to the Soviet Union, not in antiquity. The concept of the “West” itself (as opposed to “western civilization”) clearly predates the Cold War, eventually becoming linked to the Orientalism discussed by Said within the scope of European imperialism. Said seems at times to mistake the appropriation of Greco-Roman classical culture by western Europe and the United States in promoting this world view with an actual ancient articulation of it. The same may be said of the appropriation of the *Oresteia* as a foundation myth for a specific type of democratic justice linked to a “western” style of governance that is positioned as absent in “eastern” cultures. In both these cases, modern interpretation and reception have become precariously projected back onto the ancients themselves.



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**PART 1**

*Pre-Modern Receptions*





# The Reception of Aeschylus in Sicily

David G. Smith

## Aeschylus *Utique Siculus*

Is any Athenian more Athenian than Aeschylus? Yet already in antiquity, some would go so far as to ascribe to the greatest Athenian playwright an at least partially Sicilian identity. Macrobius, for example, cites Aeschylus' play *Aitnaiai* as his first authority during a discussion of native Sicel cult practices, calling its author *vir utique Siculus* ("practically Sicilian," *Sat.* 5.19.17).<sup>1</sup> Similarly, when the scholia to Aristophanes discuss the size of the Aetnaean beetles, they cite fragments by authors local to the region (ἐπιχώριοι): Epicharmus of Sicily (*Herakles Ho Epi Zostera* "Bra-Snatcher" fr. 65 KA) and Aeschylus of Athens (*Sisyphus Petrokylistes* "Rock-Roller" fr. 233 R), who is τρόπον δέ τινα καὶ Αἰσχύλος ἐπιχώριος ("in a certain way a local, too," Σ Ar. *Pax* 73b).<sup>2</sup> For both sources, the question is not whether Aeschylus was Sicilian, but how much he was (τρόπον τινα) or was not (*utique*) Sicilian. Furthermore, we must admit that, since the beetle appears not only also in Sophocles' *Daidalos* (fr. 162 R) and *Ikhneutai* (fr. 307 R), Plato Comicus' *Heortai* (fr. 36 KA), and Aristophanes' *Wealth*, it cannot be merely the beetle *per se* that makes Aeschylus—of all these—the only one τρόπον τινα ἐπιχώριος "somehow a local" of Sicily. It seems that Aeschylus is so honored because he was chronologically first; and these sources have presumed that as the first, Aeschylus learned Sicilianisms "for real," while all later authors are, perhaps, considered to have learned them *from him*, not—like he did—*from Sicily*. In other words, what matters is not who mentions this beetle and who doesn't, but what later people thought was variously significant about the many authors who mentioned it.<sup>3</sup> Aeschylus in Sicily, therefore, is more about reception than, at first, it might appear.

- 1 Herington 1967, 79 n. 28 thinks *utique* "assuredly, undoubtedly, particularly Sicilian" must be wrong and suggests we read something like *quasi* "almost, nearly, as it were, Sicilian" instead.
- 2 See Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 1994. This beetle also appears on a unique tetradrachm of Aetna dated to the late 470s or 460s, now in Brussels (de Callataÿ 2010).
- 3 See Boshier 2013 on the question of how much western Greek and other regional theater traditions would have been recognized as such in antiquity. Easterling 1994 suggests that local language could have been placed by playwrights in anticipation of foreign performance.

Adding to this suspicion, Athenaeus (9.402bc), referring to Aeschylus' use of the Sicilian word ἀσχεδωρός (wild boar) in *Phorkides* (fr. 261 R), says, "Since Aeschylus spent some time in Sicily, it is not surprising that he has used many Sicilian words."<sup>4</sup> Again, the focus is on language as a bearer of cultural identity.<sup>5</sup> Here, however, what appears to be a transparent ancient statement about how we should receive Aeschylus (i.e. because he lived there, it's obvious he's using Sicilian language) disguises a set of problematic questions about the relationship between Aeschylus' "Sicilianisms" and his "Sicilianicity": how did Athenaeus and his sources know Aeschylus spent time in Sicily, if not from the hints left in the language of the Aeschylean texts available to them?<sup>6</sup> Was there ever an independent, external tradition?<sup>7</sup> The evidence allows a spectrum of responses. Optimistic answers to these questions are connected to a maximalist reading of his Sicilianicity, which will require us to review unskeptically the evidence of various types of alleged Sicilianisms across the corpus of his plays, fragments, and testimonia. Thus, we consider first, what people say about his life in Sicily; second, what his plays and fragments tell us about his life in Sicily; and finally, what his influence and legacy in Sicily might have been. At the opposite end of the spectrum, a skeptical response

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Naturally, foreign references should not lead us to presuppose the foreign identity of their authors: see Griffith 1978, 107.

- 4 Eustathius (*Comm. ad Od.* Vol. 2.21 Stallbaum) probably repeats the passage from Athenaeus, but because he here introduces the etymology with "as it lies in a rhetorical work," and because the word for pig appears elsewhere in Eustathius (*Comm. ad Il.* Vol. 2.801) and in the lexicographers (e.g. Hesychius s.v.), there may have been another source such as Aelius Dionysius or Aristophanes of Byzantium.
- 5 For language as a bearer of cultural identity in ancient Greece generally, see Hall 1997, and for Sicily in particular, see Willi 2008 and 2012.
- 6 With respect to Aeschylus' allegedly Sicilian *patois*, Aly 1906 considered 13 words with supposed Sicilian influence and accepted nine of them as probable—not enough, however, he thought, to justify Athenaeus' claim of Sicilian Aeschylus as anything more than *imprudenter dictum*. Stanford took up the cause again in 1938, not only reconsidering Aly's list of words and adding others, but also considering a wider array of possibly western influences including Pythagoreanism, and concluded the opposite about Athenaeus, i.e. that Aeschylus was Sicilian "enough," even though four of Stanford's (1938, 231) Sicilisms are from the *Suppliants*, which confounded interpreters when the play was thought to antedate any of Aeschylus' visits to Sicily (see below). A few years later, when Lobel edited new fragments of Aeschylus' *Diktyouloko* (POxy 2161), a satyr play on a Perseus myth, he was willing to tentatively suggest that five Doric words among the fragments were also Sicilian in origin. Herington 1967 too was positive, but in 1977 and 1978, Griffith decimated the lexical case for Aeschylus in Sicily by taking *Prometheus Bound* out of the equation (cf. West 1979).
- 7 See Herington 1967 and Lefkowitz 1981, 70–7.

to these questions is based on a minimalizing reading of Aeschylus in Sicily, which might argue that even the strongest pieces of our evidence—evidence linking performance of *Aitnaiai* and *Persians* to Sicily—is so little and late that connection to Hieron's patronage would have been the obvious biographical invention. A history of attempts to place him on this spectrum going all the way back to antiquity proves the point that Aeschylus in Sicily is properly a matter of and for reception.

### Aeschylus in Sicily

By the 2nd c. CE, it seems that men like Pausanias, when discussing the commonplace of men of letters who travel to the courts of tyrants, could assume without further explanation that Aeschylus and other famous poets of his era would have frequented the court of Hieron of Syracuse: καὶ ἐς Συρακούσας πρὸς Ἰέρωνα Αἰσχύλος καὶ Σιμωνίδης ἐστάλησαν (“Aeschylus and Simonides went to Syracuse, to the home of Hieron,” 1.2.3).<sup>8</sup> The existence of this commonplace was not new, as the priamel of Pindar's *Olympian* 1 reminds not only us, but also reminded Pausanias that for poets of that era to be at Hieron's court was better than water, the sun, gold and the Olympics all rolled up in one.<sup>9</sup> If Aeschylus is to be present at the court of Hieron in Syracuse (i.e. between 478 and 467 BCE), then, the bare chronological parameters of his visits to Sicily should be represented by the following testimonia.

1.) *Vita Aeschyli* 9, an undatable compendium of mostly biographical information appended to some manuscript traditions before the 11th c. CE:<sup>10</sup> ἐλθὼν τοίνυν εἰς Σικελίαν Ἰέρωνος τότε τὴν Αἴτνην κτίζοντος ἐπεδείξατο τὰς Αἰτναίας οἰωνιζόμενος βίον ἀγαθὸν τοῖς συνοικίζουσι τὴν πόλιν (“Having gone to Sicily just when Hieron was founding Aetna, Aeschylus produced the *Aitnaiai* as a way of wishing the inhabitants of that city a good life”).

8 Paus. 1.2.3. Aeschylus' presence in Sicily may have been attested already in the Hellenistic period in a fragment of Eratosthenes of Cyrene (3rd–2nd c. BC), who reports a performance of *Persians* in Sicily that probably presumes the presence of its author as well; see below and Boshier 2012, 103 for references to debate on this point.

9 See Gentili 1988, 115–54 and Woodbury 1968.

10 The numeration of the *Vita Aeschyli* in this essay follows the 1914 Teubner edition of Wilamowitz, the 1952 Oxford text of Murray, and the Appendix to Herington 1967.

Diodorus 11.49.1–2 places the foundation of Aetna by Hieron in 476/5, presumably a *terminus post quem* for performance of the *Aitnaiai* and seemingly for Aeschylus' first attested visit to Sicily.<sup>11</sup>

2a.) Eratosthenes of Cyrene (fr. 109 Strecker, preserved in Σ Ar. *Ran.* 1028), a 3rd–2nd c. BCE author of *On Comedy*: δοκοῦσι δὲ οὗτοι οἱ Πέρσαι ὑπὸ τοῦ Αἰσχύλου δεδιδάχθαι ἐν Συρακούσαις, σπουδάσαντος Ἰέρωνος, ὥς φῆσιν Ἐρατοσθένης ἐν γ' περὶ κωμῳδιῶν (“This *Persians* seems to have been performed by Aeschylus in Syracuse at Heron's invitation”).

2b.) *Vita Aeschyli* 18: φασὶν ὑπὸ Ἰέρωνος ἀξιωθέντα ἀναδιδάξαι τοὺς Πέρσας ἐν Σικελίᾳ καὶ λίαν εὐδοκίμειν (“They say that, esteemed by Hieron, Aeschylus re-performed *Persians* in Sicily”).

*Persians* was performed in Athens in 472 (*TrGF* 1.4–5). However, if we follow Eratosthenes' δεδιδάχθαι (2a)—which is the word for *performance*, not *reperformance*—*Persians* in Sicily should be before that. If, on the other hand, we follow the *Vita*'s ἀναδιδάξαι (2b)—the proper word for *reperformance*—this would have been after 472. Aeschylus' next known production is the Theban tetralogy in Athens in 467 (*TrGF* 1.4–5). Plutarch's anecdote about him stomping off to Sicily in a huff after Cimon and his fellow generals awarded the dramatic victory to Sophocles' first performance probably accounts for his whereabouts in 468.<sup>12</sup> If he was busy producing in Athens in 467 and 468, and Hieron was dead by 467, then a re-performed *Persians* in Deinomenid Sicily should have taken place between 472 and 469.

Does this evidence allow *Persians* and *Aitnaiai* to have been produced on the same visit (reducing the overall number of visits from three to two)?<sup>13</sup> If *Persians* was not first performed in Sicily, then the first year it could have been produced after both Aetna's foundation and *Persians*' Athenian production is 471/o. This year ought to be the jackpot, for it seems to yield us also none other than Pindar's *Pythian* 1, celebrated in the 29th Pythiad for Hieron of Aetna. This celebration seems to have commemorated a successful foundation in several media, as part of a panhellenic and anti-barbarian Aetna “Fest” (on which, see more below). However, the otherwise attractive scenario that includes *Aitnaiai* with

11 Neither Bacch. 5 nor Pind. *Ol.* 1, both written for Hieron's victory in 476, mention Aetna yet.

12 Plut. *Cim.* 8: Αἰσχύλον περιπαθῆ γενόμενον καὶ βαρέως ἐνεγκόντα ... εἴτ' οἷχεσθαι δι' ὄργην εἰς Σικελίαν; but cf. *Vita* 8: ἀπῆρεν δὲ ὡς Ἰέρωνα, κατὰ τινὰς μὲν ὑπὸ Ἀθηναίων κατασπουδασθεῖς καὶ ἡσσηθεῖς νέωι ὄντι Σοφοκλεῖ, κατὰ δὲ ἐνίους ἐν τῷ εἰς τοὺς ἐν Μαραθῶνι τεθνηκότας ἐλεγείῳι ἡσσηθεῖς Σιμωνίδῃ.

13 For chronologies and their supporters, see *TrGF* 3.61–2 testimonia s.v. ‘Itinera in Siciliam.’



a reperformed *Persians* in Sicily along with *Pythian* 1 in 471/0 must explain why a city said to have been founded in 476/5 would be celebrated so many years later by a drama said to have been commissioned at the time of (τότε) the city's founding. Some assume a lengthy period for the foundation for Aetna, allowing for the monumental amount of social engineering described by Diodorus (two cities depopulated and replaced with 10,000 new immigrants), the maturation of Hieron's son (the young King of Aetna, Deinomenes II: Ἀΐτνας βασιλεῖ, Pind. *Pyth.* 1.60), and/or the reconstruction of Catania following an eruption of Aetna in 476.<sup>14</sup> A notorious problem with *Pythian* dating further frustrates any unequivocal interpretation: *Pythiad* dates begin either from when the first prize was awarded, in 586, putting *Pythian* 1 in 474, or from when the first crown was awarded, in 582, which puts *Pythian* 1 in 470.<sup>15</sup> This, unfortunately, becomes a distinction of utmost importance for reception, as it constrains our ability to decipher the relationship between the Siceliote-panhellenic rhetoric of Pindar's *Pythian* 1 and the otherwise presumably watershed development in Greek/Athenian cultural identity represented by Aeschylus' *Persians* in 472. A minimalist interpretation could emphasize, on the other hand, that, in fact, we have no certain date at all for any of the three performances, and efforts to make *Aitnaiai*, *Pythian* 1, and *Persians* all line up are merely speculative.

3a.) The Parian Marble (*BNJ* 239 F A59), a Ptolemaic-era inscription from Paros containing chronographic information about major events and figures in Greek history: ἀφ' οὗ Αἰσχύλος ὁ ποιητής, βιώσας ἔτη Δ ΙΙΙ, ἐτελεύτησεν ἐν [Γέ||λ]αι τῆς Σικελίας, ἔτη Η ΔΔΔΔΙΙΙ, ἄρχοντος Ἀθήνησι Καλλέ[ ]ου τοῦ προτέρου "[From that time to the time when] Aeschylus the poet, having lived for 69 years, died in Sicilian Gela was 193 years, in the archonship of Callias the Younger [i.e. 456/5 (cf. *Σ Ar. Ach.* 10)]."

3b.) *Vita Aeschyli* 10: καὶ σφόδρα τῷ τε τυράννῳ Ἰέρωνι καὶ τοῖς Γελώιῳις τιμηθεὶς ἐπιζήσας τρίτον ἔτος γηραιὸς ἐτελεύτα ("Especially honored by the tyrant Hieron and by the Geloans, he died an old man after three years [in Gela]").

Aeschylus' production of the *Oresteia* in 458 is his last dateable appearance in Athens, so a *terminus ante quem* of 456/5 for the end of the last visit (i.e. his death) suits all available data. These chronological parameters—*Aitnaiai* during or after the foundation of Aetna in 476/5, *Persians* before or after 472, and death in 456/5 after three years in Gela—have remained largely unchallenged since Herington's defense of them in 1967.

14 Cf. Luraghi 1994, 336–46.

15 The dispute arises mostly over Paus. 10.7.2–7; Miller 1978 defends 586/5 while Mosshammer 1982 defends 582/1.

We have seen that Hieron's patronage plays a role in the accounts of all three visits, although our explicit source for this remains solely the *Vita*: the production of the *Aitnaiai* was because he οἰωνιζόμενος βίον ἀγαθὸν τοῖς συνοικίζουσι τὴν πόλιν [Aetna] (*Vita* 9), the production of *Persians* was because he ὑπὸ Ἰέρωνος ἀξιοθέντα ... καὶ λίαν εὐδοκιμεῖν (*Vita* 18), and his retirement to Gela took place because he καὶ σφόδρα τῷ τε τυράννῳ Ἰέρωνι καὶ τοῖς Γελώσις τιμηθεὶς (*Vita* 10). When Pausanias 1.2.3 says that Aeschylus and Simonides set off to Hieron in Syracuse, it is in the context of a trope of his time (and probably earlier) about poets who depart for the court of tyrants. Indeed, attested at Hieron's court are no less than Aeschylus, Pindar, Bacchylides, Simonides, Epicharmus, and Xenophanes. But were these poets actually at the court of this patron at the time, or have they been placed there by the tradition because—especially in later periods—poets ought to have contemporary famous patrons and Hieron was the most renowned Greek autocrat of his era? Was the relationship between Hieron and Pindar in the latter's own poetry so famous that it inspired a host of analogies? Perhaps by this route, Hieron provided to the biographizing tradition an easy answer to an implied question about Aeschylus: Why would he ever have left Athens? Something must have happened to loosen his connection with the *polis* he so famously risked his life for.

In addition to reasons he was pulled or lured to Sicily, the tradition also provides reasons Aeschylus was pushed out of Athens. As we saw above, *Vita* 8 describes his reasons for departure to Hieron as, “according to some,” either defeat by the young Sophocles (in 468), or “according to others,” by the poet Simonides in a contest to compose the elegy for the dead at Marathon (shortly after 490). The part about the loss to Sophocles is probably from Plutarch *Cim.* 8, who says “Beaten by Sophocles, Aeschylus took it poorly, did not remain long in Athens, and departed in anger for Sicily, where he finished his life and was buried at Gela.” Elsewhere, though, Plutarch (*De Exil.* 604f) says simply “Aeschylus left for Sicily” without further specification, although the context involves the idea that death away from home is the mark of a wise (i.e. well-travelled) man. If the event that drove him to Sicily did not come from mere curiosity or defeat in one of these two competitions, other variations supplied a reason from his audience's reaction: *Vita* 9 states that “some say” the chorus of the *Eumenides* caused women in the audience to miscarry. Indeed, it could even come from the theater itself: the *Suda* (s.v. *Aiskhylos*), a tenth c. Byzantine encyclopedia, says Aeschylus fled to Hieron because the stands collapsed during one of his performances.<sup>16</sup>

16 Crowd disasters such as bleacher collapses tend to be horrific; Shaw 2014, 65, however, finds this anecdote humorous.

The traditions of these push-pull causes for Aeschylus in Sicily cannot easily be squared with the evidence for the chronology of his visits described above. However, what can be established is that all four push-pull accounts imply Athens' greatest playwright left Athens for Sicily under a dark cloud, either in poetic defeat or for actually causing harm with his poetry. For, otherwise, why leave? At least one epitaph from the literary tradition invokes this touchy emotional situation surrounding the departure of Athens' favorite playwright: Diodorus of Sardis, after noting that the playwright's tomb in Gela was far from his home in Athens, laments: τίς φθόνος, αἰαί, Θησείδας ἀγαθῶν ἔγκοτος αἰὲν ἔχει; ("Alas, what spiteful envy of good men always grips the sons of Theseus!" *AP* 7.40.3–4). Thus, with respect to Aeschylus' reasons for finally departing his homeland, we notice, but cannot explain, the irony that the basis for Aeschylus' status as *Siculus* results largely from an ancient anecdotal tradition about the greatest Athenian playwright's poor reception in Athens itself.

Having survived the Persian onslaught at Marathon (T11–5 R) and perhaps Salamis, too (Ion of Chios *BNJ* 392 F7), antiquity nonetheless agreed that he was brought low by an eagle that dropped a turtle on his head, as if on a rock, to get to the meat (T96–9 R). Aeschylus' ancient portrait, although poorly attested, usually displays a beard and a full head of hair.<sup>17</sup> A prominently bald bust labelled "Aeschylus" in the Capitoline museum, however, simultaneously displays the playwright bald both in old age and sporting a rupestral *facies* suitable for turtle-bombing—a combination, perhaps evoking the playwright in Sicily (whether a genuine identification or not). In terms of monuments and memory of Aeschylus in Sicily, a number of different epigrams claimed to adorn his Geloan grave—likely none of them genuine.<sup>18</sup> It is worth noting, however, that the several exemplar epigrams are remarkably restricted in their range of themes: different versions usually display one or both of two basic couplets, one about Gela and the other about Marathon.<sup>19</sup>

After his death, the *Vita* then goes on to say of Aeschylus' Sicilian grave-site: εἰς τὸ μνήμα δὲ φοιτῶντες ὅσοις ἐν τραγωιδίαις ἦν ὁ βίος ἐνήγιζόν τε καὶ τὰ δράματα ὑπεκρίνοντο ("Those who made their livelihood in tragedy made frequent trips

17 Richter 1984, 74–8.

18 Against Page's (1981, 131) doubts about their authenticity, see now Poli Palladini 2013, 296–302 and, with positive arguments for contemporary authorship, Sommertsein 2010.

19 Cf. the literary versions by Antipater of Thessalonike (*AP* 7.39) and Diodorus of Sardis (*AP* 7.40). Boshier 2013 highlights the tension between *Athenaios* and *Gelas* in the couplet quoted in Plut. *De Exil.* 604f. For the Marathon couplet, cf. Athen. 14.627cd and Paus. 1.14.5. *Vita* 11 (but cf. 17) seems to be an exercise combining the two (so Poli Palladini 2013, 298). Dioscorides (*AP* 7.411) is unique in mentioning neither Gela nor Marathon.

to the memorial, where they made offerings and staged dramas,” 11). Because, however, τὰ δράματα can refer either to the plays of the tragedians visiting Aeschylus’ tomb or to Aeschylus’ plays themselves, the meaning can be either that visiting tragedians performed their *own* plays in honor of Aeschylus, or that they staged *his* dramas in his honor. The other word of interest here is ἐνγίζον, a word used commonly of hero-cult, which might suggest these honors are not metaphorical but are testimony of actual quasi-heroic cult practice.<sup>20</sup> Interestingly enough, no classical Athenian source mentions Aeschylus’ Geloan cult, prompting Poli Palladini to suggest that Athens’ granting of reperfor-  
 mance choruses to Aeschylean dramas was, in fact, an envious reaction to the heroic glory he was getting in Gela.<sup>21</sup>

Until recently, we knew almost nothing about what a cult to Aeschylus in Gela might have involved. In fact, we only knew of dramatic competitions in classical Sicily at all from one reference in Plato *Laws* 2.659b on the judgment of theatrical performances in Sicily and Italy by acclamation of the audience<sup>22</sup> and from one fragment of Epicharmus (237 KA), which, when combined with a lemma of Hesychius (π1408), reads to the effect that comic competitions “lie on the knees of the five judges” in Sicily as they do in Athens.<sup>23</sup> While the details of the judgment method remain in dispute, the fact of dramatic competition behind them seems nevertheless to be secure, however shadowy. New details have come to light from the recent republication of a lead tablet from the mid 5th c. BCE, said to be from Gela or nearby Camarina, which seems to curse a series of *khoragoi* who are rivals of the inscribers’ beloved.<sup>24</sup> Although no exact performance context is specified in the text itself, the performance competition among Sicilian *khoragoi* implied by the lead tablet’s curse text

20 Vita 11 uses the phrase ἐν τοῖς δημοσίοις μνήμασι, which Demosthenes (*De Cor.* 208) used to refer to the public cemeteries commemorating the dead from Marathon, Plataea, Salamis, and Artemisium; cf. Basta-Donzelli 2003, 98.

21 Poli Palladini 2013, 308. On reperfor-  
 mances of Aeschylus in Athens, see Biles 2006/7, Nervegna 2014, and Hanink and Uhlig 2016.

22 ὁ Σικελικὸς τε καὶ Ἰταλικὸς νόμος νῦν, τῷ πλήθει τῶν θεατῶν ἐπιτρέπων καὶ τὸν νικῶντα διακρίνων χειροτονίαις (“the Sicilian and Italian custom turns [judgment] over to the mass of spectators and decides the winner by a show of hands”).

23 For judging dramatic contests in Athens, see Csapo and Slater 1995, 157–65.

24 See now the text in Jordan 2007 and commentary in Wilson 2007. Because Pollux (*Onom.* 9.41–2) states that *khorag-* is the stem used by Dorians for *didaskal-*, Wilson 2007, 354–66 suggests these Geloan *khoragoi* are most likely participant-trainers, rather than leito-  
 urgical producers, although a leito-  
 urgical *khoragia* may lie behind it all: cf. Sophron (fr. 147 KA) αἴ τις τὸν ξύοντα ἀντιξέει, ὁ χοραγὸς ξύεται.

could, in a maximal reading, be related to an agonistic dramatic performance in the hero-cult for the playwright.<sup>25</sup>

Unlike Sophocles and Euripides, literary evidence for Aeschylus in general becomes harder to find in the fourth century and afterwards. For example, orators and Aristotle's *Poetics* generally ignore him, and philosophers in general rarely cite him.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, one striking nonliterary testament to the overall, long-term dominance of Aeschylus in the Sicilian reception of the Athenian tragedians during the Classical period is that of vase-painting.<sup>27</sup> While from a minimalist view, only a small handful of vases from Attica or Italy/Sicily can be attributed to a specific drama (of any form), maximalist approaches identify myths in vase paintings and suggest possible relationships to a known literary title.<sup>28</sup> That relationship may involve Greek and non-Greek producers and consumers of stories known through texts, performances, retellings, or other images.<sup>29</sup> Of the potentially dramatic representations, three-fourths are of possible subjects by Aeschylus, Sophocles, or Euripides, suggesting an early canonization of the three overall.<sup>30</sup> Yet, within the western visual tradition, at least, a preference for Aeschylus with respect to the other two seems to have developed already by the fifth and fourth centuries (even though the vase-painting tradition is largely fourth-century and thus farthest away from Aeschylean memory). Taking statistics from a data-set assembled by Luigi Todisco that explicitly maximalizes identifications of tragic vase-scenes with tragic authors, what can we see in terms of Aeschylus' popularity

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- 25 The other fifth-century cults at Gela are the Rhodian Athena Lindia, the Geloan founder-cult, the Geloan river-cult, and the pan-Sicilian Demeter and Persephone—none of them necessarily more likely as a place for agonistic choral-dramatic performance.
  - 26 Perhaps because he has a lower percentage of quotable trimeters; see Nervegna 2014, 166–72 and this volume. On Aristotle and Aeschylus, see Munteanu, this volume.
  - 27 The earliest proto-dramatic images are associated with imported Corinthian aryballoi and alabastra showing padded dancers, which appear in Gela by ca. 600 (Todisco 2002, 47). On the development of vase paintings from Italy and Sicily with dramatic subjects, see Kossatz-Deissmann 1978, Csapo 2001, Todisco 2002, Todisco 2003, and Taplin 2007, 2–46. On the role of actors and vase-paintings in the spread of drama in the west, see Csapo 2010, 38–82, Dearden 1999, and Taplin 2012.
  - 28 Minimalist: see Taplin 2007 and Nervegna 2014; Maximalist: see Todisco 2002 and 2003.
  - 29 On the reception of Greek tragic vase scenes in non-Greek Italy, see Carpenter 2009. Todisco 2012 argues that the plays depicted on Apulian pots must have been translated for them; Giuliani 1995 that the transmission of tragic mythology happens through professional funerary orators. On the clues that make western Greek tragic iconography more recognizable, see Taplin 2007, 35–43; for skepticism about recognizing tragic iconography at all, see Small 2003, 37–78.
  - 30 Csapo 2010, 39.

vis-à-vis Sophocles and Euripides? Of vases with tragic subjects produced in Italy or Sicily, 371 are from Italy, and 20 from Sicily.<sup>31</sup> Of all vases with tragic subjects found in Italy or Sicily, 177 are of Aeschylus, 41 of Sophocles, and 175 of Euripides. Of vases with satyric subjects produced in Attica, 33 wound up in Italy and 6 in Sicily, yet Aeschylean scenes outnumber Sophocles and Euripides overall 26 to 13 to 0—more than twice the other two combined. Of vases with tragic scenes produced in Attica, 94 wound up in Italy and 18 in Sicily, but again, Aeschylus outnumbers the competition overall 57 to 25 to 30—again, more than twice the other two combined. If Athens uniquely granted choruses to posthumous Aeschylean productions at least partially as a response to his heroization at Gela, then such continued reperformance at Athens could, in turn, account for the prominence of Athenian ceramics depicting Aeschylean productions exported to Sicily and Magna Graeca in the same period. However, if we require a higher level of certainty and follow instead the minimalist attributions of Taplin, then Aeschylus is the least well-represented, Euripides the best.<sup>32</sup> In any event, regardless of how much popularity Aeschylean myths may have enjoyed in his afterlife among his western Greek *paesani*, there remains little direct, unequivocal evidence that they were necessarily familiar with his repertoire or able to see his dramas in performance.<sup>33</sup>

### Sicily in Aeschylus

The skeptical interpretation of the value of Aeschylus' plays themselves for the question of Aeschylus in Sicily was once axiomatic: other than *Aitnaiai* and perhaps *Persians*, no other Greek dramas—including even other plays and fragments of Aeschylus and even Epicharmus—were much worth interpreting in a local Sicilian context.<sup>34</sup> More fairly, we may put the dramatic evidence for Aeschylus in Sicily into two categories: plays for which a performance in Sicily is attested (with whatever degree of skepticism) by ancient evidence, and plays for which performance in Sicily has been proposed by modern scholars. The only two Aeschylean dramas in the former category are those mentioned above, about which Duncan observes, “The *Persians* and the *Aitnaiai* make an interesting pair for performance in Sicily: one describes a king overreaching,

31 So Todisco 2003, 745 Fig. 11.

32 Taplin 2007. A pattern which explains better Euripides' greater popularity among the Romans? Cf. Nervegna 2014, 177–85.

33 Nervegna 2014, 176.

34 Cf. Pickard-Cambridge 1927, 363.

the other legitimated a tyrant's regime; both are concerned with the proper exercise of power."<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, these happen to be the first two plays for which performance outside Athens is attested at all. Such idiosyncracies have opened the door to maximalizing hypotheses about Aeschylus *Siculus* and the rest of his corpus.<sup>36</sup> For example, Capizzi (1982) has used the importance of Dike and the Daughters of the Sun in Parmenides to argue for a link between Eleatic philosophy and a Syracusan production of *Heliades* (possibly accompanying *Aitnaiai*, or at least the Dike-play). Aeschylus' possible interests in Gela's Rhodio-Cretan heritage (cf. Thuc. 6.4.3) leads Poli Palladini to suspect that the Perseus trilogy (including *Phorkides*, with its reference to the *askhedoros* pig), *Glaukos Pontios* as satyr play, *Kretai*, *Kariai* or *Europa*, *Heliades*, *Glaukos Potnieus*, and the *Odyssea* tetralogy which is "so full of western elements that it could hardly be composed and performed anywhere but in the West, i.e. in Gela" were all composed with an eye to Sicilian performance.<sup>37</sup> In terms of directions still left to explore, the redating of *Suppliants* from the beginning to the end of Aeschylus' career invites us to reconsider its Danaid mythology and alleged Sicilianisms in the context of Sicily's contemporary cultural and political relationship to North Africa. Further connections are surely to be advanced.

### *The Women of Aetna and Prometheus*

The catalogs of titles attached to the manuscript traditions (T78 R) of Aeschylus preserve in their lists both an Αἰτναῖαι νόθοι and an Αἰτναῖαι γνήσιοι—one "spurious" and one "genuine"—but none of our fragments are preserved with either epithet. Furthermore, our fragments are few, fairly late, most of them are a single word, and the title under which they are cited varies between *Aetna*/*Aitne*, *Aitnai*, and *Aitnaiai*, each title coming with different assumptions about who the chorus might or might not be.<sup>38</sup> Reconstruction of this play, however, is inescapably influenced by external evidence. As Diodorus 11.49.1–2 describes in detail, the purpose of Aetna's foundation was Hieron's own security and glory, but the method of its foundation involved a huge effort of social

35 Duncan 2011, 74.

36 Play-by-play analyses can be found in Cataudella 1964/5, Culasso Gastaldi 1979, and now Poli Palladini 2013, 93–266.

37 Poli Palladini 2013, 9.

38 *Aetna* in Macrobius (*Sat.* 5.19.24 = fr. 6 R) and Αἰτνη in John Lydus (*De Mens.* 4.154 Wünsch = fr. 11 R); Αἰτναί in Stephanus of Byzantium (s.v. *Palike* = fr. 7 R) and the scholia to Homer (*Il.* 16.183b = fr. 8 R); Αἰτναῖαι in Hesychius (α1955 and κ4041 Latte = frs. 9 and 10 R). Manuscripts of the *Vita Aeschyli* 9 vary between the two plurals; cf. Poli Palladini 2001, 211–2.

engineering that displaced literally tens of thousands of people from their homes.<sup>39</sup> According to the *Vita* 9, then (τότε), during the foundation of Aetna and presumably in celebration of what must have been, at the least, a laborious affair, Hieron commissioned Aeschylus to compose *Aitnaiai*: “Coming then to Sicily, when Hieron was founding Aetna, he produced the *Aitnaiai* in predication of a good life for the inhabitants of the city.” Furthermore, Hieron not only commissioned an Aeschylean drama, he also won panhellenic equestrian victories, made dedications, and commissioned coins and epinician poetry which promoted his role as King Regent of Aetna and beneficent father of Greek order in various—but presumably ideologically consistent—guises.<sup>40</sup> Because the nexus of narrative and artistic choices behind this event is so particularly well fleshed-out, we should attempt for the *Aitnaiai* (as we would for any play in Athens) an interpretation that allows it a socio-politically contextualized performance and reception(s). However, contextualization is problematized by the fact that what little we know of the play itself defies easy dramatic categorization. Macrobius is the only person who calls it anything: namely, a *tragoedia*, but unlike tragedy, it is not attested to have been performed with any other plays. Some think this fact could make it a satyr play, while others reconstruct hypothetical dilogies or trilogies to fill in the gap. Furthermore, it is hard to understand what exactly the core tragedy of the play even was, let alone why Hieron would have wanted a tragedy for a celebration. Eduard Fraenkel, however, put forward an interpretation in 1954 based upon the idiosyncrasy itself of the play’s role in the founding of the city: it was, he suggested, a *Festspiel*—that is, a one-off drama performed as part of the celebrations for Aetna.<sup>41</sup>

39 Demand 1990, 45–58.

40 On Hieron in general: Freeman 1891: 2.256–89. On Hieron and Aeschylus: Fraenkel 1954, Cataudella 1964/5, Dougherty 1993, 83–102, Luraghi 1994, 336–62, Corbato 1996, and Basta-Donzelli 1996, with bibliography in Patrito 2001: 92 n. 78 and Poli Palladini 2001, 290 n. 7. On Hieron and Pindar (cf. fr 105a ζαθέων πάτερ, κτίστωρ Αἴτνας): Kirsten 1941, Trumpf 1958, Köhnken 1970, and Gantz 1974; the scholia to *Pyth.* 1.152 report couplets Hieron and his brothers supposedly inscribed on Delphic tripods: βάρβαρα νικήσαντας ἔθνη, πολλὴν δὲ παρασχεῖν σύμμαχον “Ἑλλήσιν χεῖρ’ ἐς ἐλευθερίην (see Page 1981, 247–50); *Nem.* 1 and 9, written for Hieron’s henchman Chromius, celebrate him too as an Aetnaean and compare him to Heracles, son of Zeus, god of Aetna. On Hieron and coins: Boehringer 1968, Caccamo Caltabiano 2009, and de Callataj 2010. By contrast, in panhellenic dedications, Hieron remained conspicuously down to earth as merely “the son of Deinomenes” and just one of “the Syracusans” (Harrell 2002 and 2006). For Aristophanes’ mockery of Alcibiades’ pretensions to be Hieron *redivivus* in Sicily, see Smith 2009.

41 Although perhaps different versions of the *Aitnaiai* existed which corresponded to revisions of the text for other audiences: see Poli Palladini 2001, 309–10.



The longest securely attested surviving fragment of the play comes from Macrobius' *Saturnalia* (5.19.15–31), and concerns the Sicilian cult of the Palici.<sup>42</sup> Discussing Vergil's mention (*Aen.* 9.581–5) of their cult, Macrobius' narrator says that the first person to mention these local gods was Aeschylus, and quotes from his *Aetna* [*sic*] (fr. 6 R):

SPEAKER A:	τί δῆτ' ἐπ' αὐτοῖς ὄνομα θήσονται βροτοί;	What name then will mortals give to them?
SPEAKER B:	σεμνοὺς Παλικούς Ζεὺς ἐφίεται καλεῖν.	Zeus commands that they be called the holy Palici.
SPEAKER A:	ἦ καὶ Παλικῶν εὐλόγως μένει φάτις;	And does the term "Palici" remain with good reason?
SPEAKER B:	πάλιν γὰρ ἔχουσ' ἐκ σκότου τόδ' εἰς φάος.	Yes, for "they come back" from the shadows into this light.

We notice Macrobius' emphasis on the fact that, of the many sources he goes on to quote, Aeschylus was the first to describe these gods and, moreover, he did so in a line that explains the meaning of their name, *quam Graeci ἐτυμολογίαν vocant* ("which the Greeks call an 'etymology,'" *Sat.* 5.19.17). The number of subsequent authors who discuss the Palici, indeed, seems out of proportion to the relative importance of this small, local non-Greek cult unless, I propose, later interest in the Palici was driven by Aeschylus' presentation of them in the *Aitnaiai*. Although Macrobius and Servius and Stephanus in Late Antiquity were the first to cite Aeschylus on the Palici, they do so in the same breath as they cite a host of intervening recondite Hellenistic authors who may also have had access to Aeschylus' information. Because these Palici seem to have had quite a big influence for a single scene, could a minimalist interpretation claim its impact was big enough to generate a legend about Aeschylus writing it for the nearest famous person in Sicily?

As Macrobius notes, the fragment as we have it presents us with an etymology of the Palici: they are said to *πάλιν ἔχουσι* ("come back")—thus the name Palici—*ἐκ σκότου τόδ' εἰς φάος* ("from the shadows into this light").<sup>43</sup> The cult of the twin Palici, on the slopes of Aetna at the mouth of the Smythaeus River, was connected to worship of the Delloi, two nearby craters filled with

42 Fraenkel (1954, 61–2) suggests Macrobius' source could have been Serenus Sammonicus (d. CE 212), and from there, an Alexandrian such as Didymus.

43 Cf. *Ag.* 310–1 and other mythological etymologies in Aeschylus: Epaphus (*Suppl.* 312–6), Helen (*Ag.* 687–90), Prometheus (*PV* 85–7), and especially Dike (*Cho.* 948–51) as if from Διὸς κόρα. Dougherty 1991 argues that the etymology in this fragment, however, is an act of "linguistic colonialism" that makes native gods Greek. For the actual etymology of "Palici," see Bello 1960, 89–97.

bottomless lakes, thought to be their brothers (Callias of Syracuse *BNJ* 564 F1).<sup>44</sup> Excavation has shown that the place was monumentalized in the archaic period, and Diodorus preserves for us an account of its use as a rallying point for the Sicel nationalist Ducetius in the 5th c. BCE.<sup>45</sup> As part of that account, Diodorus (11.89) tells us that the place was an asylum for escaped slaves, where solemn oaths were sworn, and under grievous penalty. The oath was written on a tablet and thrown into the water, where it would float if sworn on truly, but sink if sworn on falsely. Meanwhile, the false swearer would burst into flames (so [Arist.] *De Mir. Ausc.* 57) or simply keel over and die on the spot (so Polemon of Ilium fr. 83 Müller).<sup>46</sup> The shrine also functioned at least once as an oracle: when struck by a famine, the Palici instructed the Sicilians to sacrifice to the hero Pediacrates (Xenagoras of Rhodes *BNJ* 240 F19, preserved in the same passage of Macrobius' *Saturnalia*). Having done so, they recovered their fertility and had a harvest-festival in the sanctuary, probably behind Vergil's description of the place *pinguis ubi et placabilis ara Palici* (*Aen.* 9.585). If this is the same as the Pediacrates that Diodorus 4.23.5 says Heracles killed while passing through Sicily with the Cattle of Geryon, this myth may be connected to the Dike fragment as well (see more below). Presumably the Palici played some important, epichoric function within the larger context of Aeschylus' production for Hieron, but little can be said for certain about their exact role in the drama.<sup>47</sup>

In any event, both Macrobius and Stephanus of Byzantium (s.v. *Palike*) make it clear that Aeschylus' play conceived of the Palici as sons of Thalia (a daughter of Hephaestus) after her abduction (whether reported or dramatized) by Zeus.<sup>48</sup> Kossatz-Deissmann catalogs seven possible vases and other objects from Greek or non-Greek Italy depicting what could be this abduction scene

44 On the cult of the Palici, see Ziegler 1949, Croon 1952, Bello 1960, 81–9, Cusumano 1990, and Meurant 1998; on the Delloi, add Bello 1960, 71–81 and Manni 1981, 119–20.

45 On the site, see Theophilus *BNJ* 573 F1 and McConnell and Maniscalco 2003; for Ducetius, see Rizzo 1970.

46 Compare the recording of sins ἐν δέλτω Διός in the Dike fragment, below. A myth of divine retribution might have arisen because the hydraulic phenomena of the Delloi were associated with a carbon-dioxide layer in the surrounding atmosphere noxious enough to kill people nearby or birds passing over; cf. Hippias of Rhegium *BNJ* 554 F3 and Lykos of Rhegium *BNJ* 570 F11a/b.

47 On the political role of the Palici in a Hieronian *Aitnaiai*, see: Luraghi 1994, 336–45, Poli Palladini 2001, 319–25, Dougherty 1991, and Smith 2012.

48 The only alternative parentage was, apparently, Silenus *BNJ* 175 F3 and the tradition of Serv. *ad Virg. Aen.* 9.581.

from the *Aitnaiai*.<sup>49</sup> One in particular, a Paestan amphora of 330–310 BCE preserved now only in a drawing, shows Thalia (labelled) dropping her ball and basket as she is lifted by a giant raptor in a halo who is, no doubt, Zeus.<sup>50</sup> “Aetna,” on the other hand, is harder to pin down: it may refer to a nymph, woman, city, and/or a volcano, and it is unclear whether any or all of them made an appearance in the play. Alcimus of Sicily (*BNJ* 560 F5) made Aetna the daughter of Ouranos and Gaia. Silenus of Cale Acte (*BNJ* 175 F3) made her the daughter of Ocean (and the mother of the Palici by Hephaestus). Demetrius of Callatis (*BNJ* 85 F4) made her the daughter of Briareus (and sister of Sicanus). Simonides (*PMG* fr. 552)—whom several sources place also in Hieron’s court and in anecdotes with Hieron’s poets—said that Aetna supervised a contest between Hephaestus and Demeter (presumably the winner) for primacy in Sicily (presumably on the model of Athena and Poseidon in Athens).<sup>51</sup> Given the Deinomenid hierophancy of the Infernal Goddesses, presumably such a topic would not have been at odds with their ideals of representation.<sup>52</sup> Did the play, perhaps, dramatize, narrate, or culminate in the establishment of a cult of Zeus Aetnaeus?<sup>53</sup> There was even an early tradition linking the Deinomenid namesake Gelon with the Sicilian landmark Aetna. Stephanus of Byzantium (s.v. *Gela*) cites both Proxenus of Epiros (*BNJ* 703 F4) from the 3rd c. BCE and Hellanicus of Lesbos (*BNJ* 4 F199) already from the 5th c. BCE for the idea that Gela was named after an early Gelon (i.e. not the famous one) who was himself the son of Aetna.

For a long time, precious little else was known about this play. Edward Freeman, the 19th century English historian of Greek Sicily, lamented, “Written and acted in Sicily on a subject purely Sicilian, it would be gladness indeed to the historian of Sicily to have the tragedy in its fulness instead of a few small fragments.”<sup>54</sup> Fortunately, in 1952 Edgar Lobel published POxy 2257 fr. 1 (fr. 451t R), which, he suggested, contains this play’s remarkable hypothesis: it says that the action moved from Aetna to Xuthia to Aetna to Leontini and finally to (following Pfeiffer’s suggestion) Temenite, the district in ancient Syracuse where the Greek theater itself is located. Naturally,

49 Kossatz-Deissmann 1978, 33–44.

50 Either as eagle or vulture: see Poli Palladini 2001, 307.

51 On Simonides in Sicily, see Molyneux 1992, 220–36 and Podlecki 1979.

52 On the Deinomenid hierophancy, see Hdt. 7.153 and cf. Hinz 1998, Polacco 1986, White 1964; cf. Pind. *Nem.* 1.13–18, for Hieron’s son-in-law and *generalissimo* Chromius, in which Zeus grants Sicily to Persephone.

53 Mentioned in Deinomenid contexts by Pind. *Pyth.* 1.29–32, *Ol.* 6.96, and *Nem.* 1.6.

54 Freeman 1891, 2.280.

various ways to distribute fragments and scenes across the acts have since been proposed.<sup>55</sup> These efforts are partially hampered by the fact that such movement is unparalleled elsewhere in tragedy (except, to some extent, *Eumenides* and *Ajax*), and this additional exceptionalism has, again, been used to shore up the case for either satyr play or Festspiel. However, Aeschylus was no stranger to plots with extremely unusual staging and plot structure.<sup>56</sup> Rather than considering such scene-changes in *Aitnaiai* and *Eumenides* to be problematic, Revermann notes that both of these plays were changing scenes while engaging in a “sustained aitiological mode.”<sup>57</sup> Thus perhaps we ought to be looking instead for a career-long relationship between aitiology and dramaturgy that apparently featured last in *Eumenides*, in Athens, but was possibly seen first in *Aitnaiai*, in Sicily.

Fraenkel nominated two other fragments from Lobel's POxy volume as potentially belonging to *Aitnaiai*; if genuine, they would more than double our knowledge of the play.<sup>58</sup> The first candidate is POxy 2256 fr. 9 (fr. 281a R), which contains a long conversation between Dike and an unnamed group of people (ὑμεῖς) to whom she has been sent. These people are either a chorus of satyrs and the fragment belongs to some satyr play, or the chorus are women or nymphs; if the latter, following Fraenkel's Festspiel hypothesis, perhaps they are of Aetna and the fragment belongs to an *Aitnaiai* celebrating Hieron's foundation of the city.<sup>59</sup> In either case, Dike is having a discussion with a chorus

55 See La Rosa 1973/4, Garzya 1977, and now Poli Palladini 2001, 296–311; the reconstruction by Görschen 1956 is palaeographically difficult and so rarely followed. Taplin 1977, 416–8 discusses the dramaturgical considerations.

56 Consider the paired speeches in *Sept.* or the immobile protagonist of *PV* or the central *kommos* of *Cho.* (Poli Palladini 2001, 290).

57 Revermann 2008, 252–3.

58 The fragments of POxy 2256 and 2257 are printed here as they appear in Radt *TrGF* vol. 3; on the text of the Dike fragment, see now Patrito 2001 and Cipolla 2010. For maximal reconstructions and a full English translation, see Lloyd-Jones' 1956 appendix to the Loeb volume of Aeschylus fragments.

59 Because the word ὅτι is attested in line 9 of this fragment and Eur. *Cyc.* 643, but nowhere else in tragedy, it could be that the Dike fragment is from a satyr play (so already Lobel 1952, 39, Lloyd-Jones 1956, 59; Sutton 1983 proposed *Kerykes*, Görschen 1955 proposed *Theoroi*). If this is true, and if the Dike fragment is from the *Aitnaiai*, the latter would itself have been a satyr play, unless an idiosyncratic Sicilian Festspiel (Fraenkel 1954) or some other “condizioni siciliane e alle esigenze del momento” (Stark 1956) allows

about the aitiology of her cult and the institution of her honors in society—remarkable all the more because Dike speaks nowhere else in extant drama:

DIKE:	ἴζω Διὸς θρόνονισιν [...] ἰσμένη· (10) πέμπει δὲ μ' αὐτὸς οἷσιν εὖμεν[ Ζ[ε]ὺς, ὅσπερ ἐς γῆν τήνδ' ἐπεμψέ μ' ..[ ..] εἰσθε δ' ὑμεῖς εἴ τι μὴ μᾶ[την] λέγω.	I sit [appointed] at the throne of Zeus. He himself sends me to those to whom [he is] well-disposed, Zeus who indeed sent me to this place. You yourselves [...] if I do not speak at all in vain.
CHORUS:	ἄ[...]. οὐ[...]. προ[...]. σπυγέποντες οὐ[...]. ἤσομε[ν].	Then what shall we rightly call you?
DIKE:	Δίκην μ[...]. ὃν πρεσβ[...]. ρ[...]. (15)	Justice, [...].
CHORUS:	πρίας δὲ τ[...]. ἡς ἀρχ[...]. εἰς[...].	What sort of privilege do you control?
DIKE:	τοῖς μὲν δ[...]. καίοις ἐνδίκον τειν[...].	I extend a just [life] to the just.
CHORUS:	]. σα θε[...]. ὃν τ[...]. ἐν βρ[...]. τ[...].	It's a [fine] custom among mortals.
DIKE:	τοῖς δ' αὖ μα[...]. καίοις .[...]. [...]. [...]. φ[...].	But for the reckless [...].
CHORUS:	ἐ]π[...]. δ[...]. ἡ κατ' ἰσχύος τρόπ[...]. (20)	Persuading them with charms or with strength?
DIKE:	γράφουσα] τ[...]. <μ>π[...]. ἡ κατ' ἐν δέλτ[...]. Διό[...].	[By writing] their offences on the tablets of Zeus.
CHORUS:	]. ω[...]. δ[...]. π[...]. ἀναπτύσσει[...]. κακ[...].	[When] do you open the tablet for evil-doers?
DIKE:	]ηι σφιν ἡμέρα τὸ κύριον. [...]. ἐκτέα στρατῶ [...]. ἐχοιτό μ' εὐφρ[...]. ὄν[...]. (25)	[Whenever] the day is right for them. [...] should be welcomed by a people [...] if they received me kindly.

If the Dike fragment belongs to *Aitnaiai*, then it must date quite early, and its influence on later Aeschylean drama ought to be reassessed. This is particularly true with respect to the importance of aetiologies in tragedy: the Palici's epiphany provokes a question about their future status among men: τί δῆτ' ἐπ' αὐτοῖς ὄνομα θήσονται βροτοί “What name will mortals give to them?” The Dike fragment may feature forms of δέχομαι at least twice in this cultic regard: she insists she(?) ought to be ]εκτέα στρατῶ “welcomed by the people” and says ]έχοιτό μ' εὐφρ[...]. ὄν[...]. “they should welcome me kindly.”<sup>60</sup> In terms of the reception of Dike, it should be noticed that the chorus calls the “people” who will welcome her a *stratos*, which is exactly the word Pindar calls the people of Aetna when writing for Hieron (*Pyth.* 1.86).<sup>61</sup> *Eumenides*, too, displays similar aetiological futures (esp. 415: πεύση τὰ πάντα and 419: τιμάς γε μὲν δὴ τὰς

for idiosyncratic use of ὁπύ. Cataudella 1964/5 is the strongest rejection of the satyr play hypothesis; see Poli Palladini 2001, 313–5 for a recent argument in support.

60 There may be a third at the beginning of the passage, if Fraenkel is right to read δέξ]εσθε δ' ὑμεῖς “You all will receive (me) ...” in line 13. Compare τέχμαρ δὲ λέξω, below.

61 The word is aptly chosen: most of the new citizens of Aetna, who displaced the earlier citizens of Catana, were mercenary settlers from Hieron's armies (Patrito 2001, 94).

ἐμάς πεύση), and when the conversation in the Dike fragment turns on the role of Justice in the society where she has arrived, her announcements proceed not unlike the series of proclamations made by Aeschylus' Erinyes (e.g. *Eum.* 937–47; 976–86) about their holy prerogatives in Athens. These similarities persist down to the level of similar stichomuthic patterns in the places where the Palici, Dike, and the Erinyes (cf. especially *Eum.* 208–31 and 415–27) reveal their powers.

Again, we cannot be certain that the Dike fragment is from *Aitnaiai*, but a maximal interpretation of Aeschylus in Sicily would note that, if it were, it should be interpreted in light of Hieronian ideology. One of the centerpieces of Hieronian propaganda while founding the city of Aetna seems to have been to map recent family victories over the Etruscans and Carthaginians onto the Hesiodic tradition which told of Zeus' defeat of Typhon under Aetna, then to present himself, Zeus-like, as founder and lawgiver for the eponymous city.<sup>62</sup> Thus, while Dike is the daughter of Zeus in both Hesiod (*Th.* 901–3) and Aeschylus (e.g. *Sept.* 662 and *Cho.* 948–50), it may not be an accident that in this fragment Dike also identifies herself as sitting at the throne of Zeus (ἵζω Διὸς θρόνοισιν [...] ἱσμέγη), which is precisely Hesiod's conception of her in the *Works and Days* (259–60).<sup>63</sup> Here, too, she is also acting as his emissary: does Zeus send Dike to these people like Hieron does to the new citizens of Aetna? Furthermore, the Dike fragment refers to Justice as recording the transgressions of mortals ἐν δέλτῳ Διός. “on the note-pads of Zeus.” Even though the idea of a list of transgressions being kept for Zeus by Justice on a tablet is rare, it is shared elsewhere, as we saw above, by none other than the Palici (according to Diodorus, Polemon, and [Arist.]).<sup>64</sup> Thus Aeschylus makes both Dike and the Palici (in *Aitnaiai*, if we follow the evidence for their cult elsewhere) offspring of Zeus to whom are entrusted the oversight of mortal injustices by means of a tablet.

The Dike fragment continues with a tale about a child of Hera and Zeus who was once an ill-tempered *bandito* hurling missiles at travelers:

62 Particularly in Pindar *Pyth.* 1.13–28; cf. *Ol.* 4.6–7; cf. Kirsten 1941, Trumpp 1958, and Gantz 1974.

63 Dike here fulfills two functions (both *paredros* and emissary of Zeus) she elsewhere plays separately; cf. Kantorowicz 1955.

64 We find the *deltoi* of Zeus, accompanied by Dike, also in Eur. *Melanippe* (fr. 506 N<sup>2</sup>), but cf. too Hades in Aesch. *Eum.* 275, who δελτογράφῳ δὲ πάντ' ἐπωπᾶ φρενί, and Prometheus' instruction to Io in *PV* 789 to ἐγγράφου σὺ μνήμοσιν δέλτοις φρενῶν; cf. Solmsen 1944 and Patrino 2001, 94–5.

πό]λις τις οὔτε δῆμος οὔτ' ἔτης ἀνὴρ  
 τοιάνδε μοῖραν π[αρ]ὰ θεῶν καρπομένη [   
 τῆκμαρ δὲ λέξω τῷ τόδ' εὐδερκέ[ς] φερε[...]. [ (30)   
 ἔθρε[ψ.] παῖδα μάργον ὃν τίκτει [   
 "Ἡρα μίγείσα Ζηνὶ θυμοιδ[   
 δ]ύσφαρκτ[ο]ν, αἰδῶς δ' οὐκ ἐνῆ[ν] φρ[ον]ήματι·   
 [ ]·υκτα τῶν ὀδοιπόρων βέλη   
 [ ]·δως ἀγκύλαισιν ἄρταμων· (35)   
 [ ]·ν ἔχ[αι]ρε καγγέλα κακόν   
 [ ]·ν ᾗζοι φόνος·   
 [ ]·μουμένη   
 [ ]·ιπρ[.....]γον χέρρα   
 [ ]·οῦν ἐνδίκως κυλλήσεται (40)   
 [ ]·νιν ἐνδικ[.....]·ος·

No city or population or individual...  
 Reaping such fate from the gods...  
 I will tell you a confirmation by which... this clearly:  
 I [or "She"] raised a rampant child, whom  
 Hera bore to Zeus, hot-tempered [...]   
 Hard to govern, there was no reverence in his thinking.  
 [?-ible] Missiles... Travellers  
 [...] Hacking [?-ly] into pieces... joints(?)  
 [...] He rejoiced and laughed... evil  
 [...] Slaughter...  
 [...]   
 [...]   
 [...] and so(?) will justly be called...  
 [...] Just.

The identity of this unruly *pais* has been variously debated.<sup>65</sup> First of all, much depends on whether the speaker of ἔθρε[ψ.] is construed to be saying of him "I [Dike?] raised" or "She [Hera?] raised." Second, one must find a character who suits the circumstances. Robertson (1953) proposed a young Ares on trial by the Areopagus for the murder of Hallirotius, although the god is not otherwise known for using missiles other than javelins. Sutton (1983) thinks this fragment is not from *Aitnaiai* at all, and that the *pais margos* is a young Heracles mutilating the heralds of Erginus in the satyr play *Kerykes*. Görschen (1955) agrees but restores the name Sinis, making the satyr play Aeschylus' *Theoroi e Isthmiastai*. A maximalist interpretation of Aeschylus in Sicily, however, would seek to place the *pais margos* of the Dike fragment into a context that makes sense for a Hieronian *Aitnaiai*. To this purpose, Kakridis (1962) proposed the *pais* was Heracles, who during his search for the Cattle of Geryon, passed through what was probably the Leontinian plain and killed six local Sican heroes who tried to stop him (Diod. 4.23.5). The notion of Heracles as a young *bandito* in Sicily may be supported by the Sicilian precedent of Stesichorus' reference to him ἐν ληστοῦ σχήματι (*PMGF* fr. 229 Davies), and Heracles may also make sense given his importance as son of Zeus to Hieron's Aetna project.<sup>66</sup> One of the Sican heroes Heracles killed was named Pediacrates, probably the same Pedicrates whom Xenagoras (*BNJ* 240 F19) said the Sicels venerated at the shrine of the Palici.<sup>67</sup> In this way, Heracles the unruly *pais* could be connected to the *Aitnaiai* via the Palici.

65 See Cipolla 2010, 139–41 for recent bibliography.

66 Particularly via Chromius in Pindar's *Nemean* 1 and 9; cf. Slater 1984 and see below.

67 See Croon 1952, 127.

Corbato (1996), however, has revived the case for a young Ares by adducing the opening of Pindar's *Pythian* 1, with its emphasis on war being supplanted by the appreciation of music in a period of peace initiated by the victories of the Deinomenids and celebrated in various media afterwards. Later, then, once educated either by Dike or Hera, Ares' transformation would be a symbol of a "just" Greek war, one that has led to a period of peace and prosperity (cf. Stark 1956). This interpretation involves a final fragment from Lobel's 1952 POxy volume, which seems to praise Eirene "Peace" for honoring a tranquil city (POxy 2256 fr. 8 = fr. 451n Radt):

[ ]σ..νύσσα μὴ σπείρειν κακ[	not to sow evils
[ ]ντ.τ' ἐστὶν εἰρήνη βροτοῖς	(... mortals have peace.
[ ].αἰνω τήνδε· τι[μ]ῆ γάρ πόλιν	I will praise this goddess. For she honors the city
ἐν ἡσὺ[χοισ]! πράγμασιν καθημένην·	which sits among peaceful affairs
δόμων τ' ἄεξεῖ κάλλος ἐκπαγλοῦ[μ]εον	and she will augment the amazing beauty of homes
ἄμῖλλαν ὥστε γειτόνων δλβω κρατεῖν·	so that the city wins the contest of neighbors for prosperity)
]δ' αὖ φυτεύειν, οἱ δ[έ] γῆς ἐπεμβολὰς	nor to cause them to grow. But land for ploughing,
..]μψ λέληνται δαίτας πεπαυμέ[νοι	having ceased from the destructive
σάλλ]πιγγοσ, οὐδὲ φρουρί.. ἔξ..[.]	war-trumpet, they eagerly take for themselves...
[ ]...[.]ωιν[	nor the violent fortresses.
[ ]τθ..ειδ.[	

This fragment resonates with the earlier ones in a variety of ways: its announcement of praise, inquiry into divine prerogatives, and future tense description of she who honors the city and its homes echoes that of Dike and the Palici.<sup>68</sup> Its hand is not incompatible with that of fragment 9; Cataudella even notes that, in a sense, fragment 8's ἐπ[α]ινω τήνδε could follow immediately on it.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, the description of tranquillity this Peace will bring (τι[μ]ῆ γάρ πόλιν ἐν ἡσὺ[χοισ]! πράγμασιν καθημένην, "She honors a city whose affairs have become peaceful") uses language paralleled in Pindar's wish in *Pythian* 1 for the tranquil circumstances he hopes Zeus will help Hieron and his son, as leaders of Aetna, usher in: δᾶμον γεραίρων τράποι σύμφωνον ἐς ἡσυχίαν ("May he lead the people, by honoring them, into harmonious peace," 69–71; cf. Dickie 1984).

68 Corbato 1996 rightly compares even Aesch. *Eum.* 937–47 and 976–86; cf. Görschen 1959.

69 Cataudella 1964/5, 395.



From a Hesiodic perspective, Zeus' defeat of Typhon (*Th.* 901–3) was followed shortly thereafter by his fathering of Eirene, Dike, and Eunomia. Having just found the first two, if we could find reference to Eunomia in Hieron's Pindaric-Aeschylean project, we would be more certain that the patron was encouraging a Hesiodic model for his defense of the Greek cosmos against the Etrusco-Carthaginian Typhoeus. In fact, Lloyd-Jones does read these two fragments containing Dike and Eirene as two of the three Hesiodic Horae and connects them to Hieron's explicit desire to be represented as someone concerned precisely, as king of Aetna, with good (Dorian) laws again in Pindar's *Pythian* 1: πόλιν κείναι θεοδ'μάτῳ σὺν ἐλευθερίᾳ Ὑλλίδος στάθμας Ἴέρων ἐν νόμοις ἔκτισσε ... αἰεὶ μένειν τεθμοῖσιν ἐν Αἰγυμιοῦ Δωριεῖς ("Hieron established that city with god-fashioned freedom under the laws of Hyllus' rule ... always to remain, under the statutes of Aegimius, Dorians, 60–5)."<sup>70</sup> In *Nemean* 9, for Hieron's friend Chromius of Aetna, Pindar is concerned explicitly with the *eunomia* of Aetna, begging Zeus μοῖραν δ' εὖνομον αἰτέω σε παῖσιν δαρὸν Αἰτναίων ὁπάζειν ("to grant a well-lawed fate for a long time to the children of the Aetnaeans," 29–30).

Lloyd-Jones even went so far as to propose that, if the *Aitnaiai* were part of a Sicilian trilogy concerned (as the *Oresteia* in Athens) with the establishment of justice in human society, then the other plays of the trilogy preceding this one may have been the *Prometheus Bound* and *Prometheus Unbound*, thought since the early 19th century by some to owe their peculiarities to Sicilian authorship or production.<sup>71</sup> Such a trilogy would then tell the following story: Prometheus steals fire and is punished (*Desmotes*); a kindlier Zeus lets Heracles free the titan on his way to acquire the cattle of Geryon—an indisputably Sicilian myth in and of itself (*Lyomenos*); having been resolved on the divine realm, Dike descends to the new city of peace and justice on earth and institutes her powers there (*Aitnaiai*). Whether or not we accept Lloyd-Jones' proposal, there exist recurring connections between Aetna (and so perhaps the *Aitnaiai*) and the Prometheus legend that invite interest. First are the well-known similarities between the description of the eruption of Aetna in Pindar's *Pythian* 1.13–28 (a poem which was composed, like the *Aitnaiai*, in celebration of the foundation of Aetna)<sup>72</sup> and in the *Prometheus Bound* (361–7). Thalia, the mother of the Palici in the *Aitnaiai*, is herself the daughter of Hephaestus, who in Silenos (*BNJ* 175 F3) is himself the father, with Aetna, of the Palici, and who in Aelian

<sup>70</sup> Lloyd-Jones 1971, 100–2.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. also Lloyd-Jones 1969. Griffith 1978, 125 n. 1 provides early bibliography.

<sup>72</sup> The date wavers between 480 (Parian Marble *BNJ* 239 F52) and 476 (Thuc. 3.116).

(*HA* 11.3) had his forge beneath Aetna. On a minor note, Pausanias 9.25.6 tells us that one of the Cabiri named Prometheus had a son named Aetnaeus. Finally, the titular characters of Epicharmus' *Prometheus* or *Pyrrha* might be rightly presumed to deal with a flood narrative rather than with Sicily; however, the Augustan-era *Fabulae* of Hyginus (153) say that, after the flood, Deucalion and Pyrrha landed on Mt. Aetna.<sup>73</sup>

Of course, not the smallest problem with Lloyd-Jones' theory is that Aeschylus' authorship of *Prometheus Bound* is disputed.<sup>74</sup> What cannot be denied, however, is that where Homer and Hesiod had said Typhoeus lived among the Arimi in Asia Minor (cf. Strabo 13.4.6 and Solmsen 1949, 124–77), *Prometheus Bound* 365–7 and *Pythian* 1 both connect Zeus' victory over Typhon to Aetna in Sicily. This location later became part of the Hesiodic tradition when Hesiod's description of Typhon's place of punishment as αἰδωνῆς (*Th.* 860) was read by the scholia to Lycophron's *Alexandra* 688 as Αἰτνῆς—although the initial diphthong must be metrically disyllabic, which is difficult—probably because the tradition apparent by the time of Pindar and the *Prometheus Bound* (whether or not Aeschylean) persisted.

Such is basically the maximal “Festspiel” interpretation in which all discussed fragments and comparanda texts belong to a Hieronian production of *Aitnaiai*. It makes Aeschylus read very Hesiodically, a reputation hard to question and one which, in circular fashion, seems eminently suited to Hieronian politics. However, a play or plays with these fragments about local cults, the institution of justice and peace after war, and with scenes bouncing around between locations in eastern Sicily, could equally be contextualized and interpreted in other important moments of Sicilian history, such as the island's period of democracy beginning in 466 (thus overlapping with Aeschylus' final visit by over a decade) or in relation to Ducetius' involvement in Greek affairs around 460, which attempted a Sicel re-nationalization of the Palici. These latter, and other, possible contexts have not been explored—not because they would not be fruitful, but rather on the sole basis of the chronological data provided by the *Vita* that connects this play to Hieron. If that one, late text had been lost, would we not now be seriously considering how *Aitnaiai* was performed and received in Athens?

73 Hyginus' version may look back to Epich. fr. 120 KA, which references Deucalion and Pyrrha's famous creation of *laoi* “people” from *laes* “rocks.”

74 Sicily plays an important role in the dispute over the Aeschylean authorship of *Prometheus Bound*: see the influential skeptical arguments in Griffith 1977 and 1978 (cf. West 1979). Flintoff 1986 makes a new argument for authenticity from an Epicharmean perspective.

### *The Persians and Glaukos*

Aeschylus' *Persians* is remarkable for its historical subject matter, its obvious favor towards those who won the battle of Salamis, and yet its apparent sympathies for several groups—perhaps Athenians, Greeks, and Persians alike. At the same time, it is exceptional for having apparently been performed outside of Athens. Thus, how sympathy and dramaturgy intersected with local politics and performance is of the highest interest with Aeschylus' *Persians*. Unfortunately, neither of our attestations for performance of *Persians* in Sicily are particularly dateable. Moreover, as we saw earlier, they differ on the specific word used to describe the event. The late Aeschylean *Vita* 18 uses the word ἀναδιδάξαι, which properly refers to a *reperformance*. The scholia to Aristophanes *Frogs* (1028), however, citing the much earlier and presumably rather reliable Hellenistic literary scholar Eratosthenes of Cyrene's 2nd c. to 3rd c. BCE treatise *On Comedy*, use the word δεδιδάχθαι, a word normally used to refer to a (first) performance. Taking the sources merely at face value, then, one should say that the *Persians* was performed first at Syracuse, and only later, in 472 (IG 11<sup>2</sup>2318), at Athens; but this is not easily accepted.<sup>75</sup>

To make matters even more complex, testimony that at least two separate texts of *Persians* existed in antiquity starts fairly early.<sup>76</sup> In Aristophanes' *Frogs* (1028–9), produced in 405 BCE, Dionysus recalls being delighted at the announcement of the death of Darius [*sic*] and at the chorus' clapping lamentations of “Iauoi!” in the play.<sup>77</sup> In the imperial period, Athenaeus (3.86b) says Aeschylus' *Persians* contained the word νηριτοτρόφοι “sea-snail-breeding” (fr. 285 R) and the late scholia on Hermogenes (*Rhet. Gr.* 5.486 Walz) perhaps attest for it the word ὑπόξυλος (see fr. 286 R). None of these four things feature in the text of the *Persians* extant to us, and assuming they are not misled there are two explanations: either 1. these are attestations from another *Persians*-related title by a different author (e.g., Epicharmus, Timotheus, Empedocles, or even Phrynichus?) or from another Aeschylean title (e.g., *Perrhaibidai*, cf. *TrGF*

75 Kiehl 1852 first noticed the distinction between δεδιδάχθαι and ἀναδιδάξαι; Wilamowitz agreed in 1897 but changed his mind shortly thereafter in 1901; see now Bosher 2012.

76 Broadhead 1960, xlvi–liv, Garvie 2009, liii–lvii.

77 See Dover 1993, 320–1 and *TrGF* T56a/b for the *Persians* in the *Frogs* scholia, including the fragments of Eratosthenes, Herodicus, and Didymus. Schönemann 1887 discusses the editorial history behind this passage, suggesting Herodicus and Eratosthenes had read *Mardonius* where we read *Darius*. Dionysus' misrememberings (if not merely comic dramaturgy) prompted Constantinidis 2012 to suggest yet another, third, possible version of the text—one produced after 467 that depicts Xerxes' assassination—seen by Aristophanes during the Peloponnesian war.

3.385–6) confused by the quoting author or by the manuscript tradition; or 2. these words really did come from a non-extant edition of Aeschylus' *Persians*.

Furthermore, there is explicit testimony about a second edition of the *Persians*. The scholia to the same *Frogs* passage above quote the second-century BCE scholar Herodicus of Babylon from the Pergamene school,<sup>78</sup> who says again explicitly not only that there were two texts of the play, but also that the second text pertained to Plataea (i.e. not to Salamis!). Eratosthenes is then quoted to the effect that one of these two *Persians*—unfortunately, the Greek is not unequivocal (i.e. depending on the strength of οὐτοί)—was performed in Syracuse at Hieron's invitation. Finally, Didymus is quoted to the effect that there were two *Persians*, but that one of them did not survive. Of course, once a different text for the Syracuse performance is an admitted possibility, the doors to hypothesized interpolations open. These include not just Herodicus' switch of Plataea for Salamis, but also the removal of the Darius necromancy altogether, or, conversely, the addition of the same scene from the Syracusan text to a lost first-edition of the now-extant, rewritten Athenian text.<sup>79</sup>

Bosher, however, argues not from the scholia but from performance considerations that “the première of the *Persians* fits more neatly into the Syracusan context than it does the Athenian.”<sup>80</sup> Essentially, she argues, our play is at least as receivable in Syracuse as at Athens because Syracuse, like Athens, polarized the Greek and barbarian worlds and was concerned, *mutatis mutandis*, with the true nature of tyranny in the early fifth century. Assuming for the sake of argument that it was the extant text that was performed in Syracuse, these similarities bring up two major issues of reception. First, as has been often remarked, there are no Athenian individuals named in the play; in fact, the Athenians themselves are often simply called “Hellenes.” In Athens, this presumably “democratizes” the glory of the victory, but it also—intentionally or accidentally—makes the drama's reception by non-Athenian audiences less confusing in general, and could encourage Syracusans, in particular, to make the same sorts of parallels between Salamis and their own naval victory over the Etruscans at Cumae in 474 (Diod. 11.51) that Pindar was making in his contemporary *Pythian* 1 (71–80). Second, the perceived dichotomy between democratic Greeks and tyrannical barbarians in the first half of the play's account of the Battle at Salamis is balanced by the opposition between the wise tyrant Darius and the foolish tyrant Xerxes in the second half. When considering

78 Düring 1941, 126–7.

79 See now Garvie 2009, liv for references.

80 Bosher 2012, 108–11.

performance of the play both in autocratic Sicily and democratic Athens, then, it becomes important that the failure of the autocratic Persians winds up in the end portrayed not as a failure of tyrannical government *per se*, but of the individual tyrant.<sup>81</sup> This aspect of a Syracusan *Persians* commissioned by the despot Hieron may also be apparent in Pindar's admonition juxtaposing good and bad tyrants at the end of his first *Pythian*—also commissioned by Hieron at Syracuse—that οὐ φθίνει Κροίσου φιλόφρων ἀρετά: τὸν δὲ ταύρῳ χαλκῆῳ καυτήρα νηλέα νόον ἐχθρὰ Φάλαριν κατέχει παντᾶ φάτις (“the kindly virtue of Croesus does not fade away: but a nasty reputation entirely overwhelms Phalaris, that cook with the bronze bull and pitiless intent,” 95–8). Even Bacchylides' *Ode 3* for Hieron's Olympic chariot victory in 468 not only takes Croesus' salvation by Apollo as its central and presumably paradigmatic myth but also swipes the loaded word ἀβροβάταν to describe the Persian slave who lights Croesus' pyre from Aeschylus' *Persians* 1073, where it described the wailing Persian chorus in its grief.<sup>82</sup>

The hypothesis of *Persians* states that it was performed as the second play in a tetralogy: *Phineus*, *Persians*, *Glaukos* [*Potneius*], *Prometheus* (satyr play).<sup>83</sup> Our sources do not mention if the other plays in the tetralogy other than *Persians* were performed in Sicily, nor can we be certain that there was the same thematic or narrative connection between them that we see elsewhere in Aeschylus' *Laïos* or *Oresteia* trilogies. What little we know from their few fragments, however, could have important ramifications for the Syracusan production of *Persians*. *Phineus* dealt with Zetes' and Calaïs' rescue of the titular seer from torment by the Harpies, in return for which Phineus provided the Argonauts some insight into their future.<sup>84</sup> His prophecies, which helped the Greek Argonauts invade Asia, may be a thematic bridge across the trilogy to the oracles which foretold the ill fate of the Persian invasion of Greece (cf. Hdt. 9.42–3) that Darius mentions later in the *Persians* (739–40 and 801). The trilogy would then begin by foreshadowing the Persian invasion of Greece with the

81 For continuities between autocratic and other forms of government in Sicilian theatrical traditions, Monoson 2012.

82 Later tradition (Athen. 6.231e–232c, drawing on Phaenias and Theopompus in the late 4th c. BCE) asserted that the Deinomenid tyrant brothers Gelon and Hieron were the first Greeks since Croesus to dedicate gold tripods at Delphi; cf. Gentili 1953, Krumeich 1991, Luraghi 1994, 358–61, and Kurke 1999, 130–42.

83 See now Sommerstein 2012.

84 Zetes and Calaïs were sons of Boreas and Oreithyia, who had rendered noteworthy aid to the Athenians during the Persian Wars and were celebrated in Athenian poetry and cult; cf. Hdt. 7.189 and Sim. *PMG* fr. 534 with Agard 1966.

Argonauts' invasion of Asia in *Phineus*; the Persian invasion of Greece in the second play then comes as retaliation (compare Herodotus 1.1–5) and culminates, at least in our version, in Salamis. On this arc, and assuming a connected trilogy, whither do our expectations about the third play point: Plataea, or perhaps Himera?

First, however, the identity and interpretation of the third play are complicated by the manuscript tradition. Not only are there two Aeschylean plays with the title *Glaukos*—*Glaukos Potnieus* “of Potnia” and *Glaukos Pontios* “the Seaman”—but many of our fragments and references to the title are quoted in antiquity simply as from “*Glaukos*” without further specification.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, the plots of the two *Glaukoi* seem to have shared several elements (*TrGF* 3.141–57).<sup>86</sup> *Glaukos Pontios*, “Seaman,” a title attested in the catalog of Aeschylean manuscripts, seems to be the story of a fisherman from Anthedon in Boeotia who eats magic grass, leaps into the sea, peregrinates, and emerges as a sea-god who later pines after a pre-monstrous Scylla. Pausanias 9.22.7 says both Pindar and Aeschylus received the story from locals in Anthedon. Glaukos' prophetic abilities as sea-god are mentioned in Aristotle in his *Delian Constitution* (fr. 490 Rose = Athen. 7.296c) and in Euripides' *Orestes* 362–5, where he prophesies Agamemnon's death to Menelaus. Presumably his love for Scylla is in some way the story preserved in Ovid *Met.* 13.917–65, but also in a fine tetrameter poem written by the young Cicero and admired by Plutarch *Cic.* 2. However, *Pontios* seems to be a satyr play and thus not part of the *Persians* tetralogy.

*Glaukos Potnieus*, “of Potniae” in Boeotia, although not attested with this epithet in the catalog, is listed in certain codices of the hypothesis as the third play in the *Persians* trilogy. Glaukos of Potniae was famous for being eaten by his own horses while competing in the funeral games of Pelias. The mares were ravenous because Glaukos had sought to increase their competitiveness either by keeping them from mating or by feasting them on flesh instead of grass (interestingly, the inverse of Glaukos Pontios' transformation by eating

85 Even the Medicean manuscript tradition of the *Persians* hypothesis leaves off the specifier “*Potnieus*,” leading some to suppose the third play may have been the *Glaukos Pontios*; however, this play seems to have been a satyr play itself. *Prometheus* here should probably be the *Prometheus Purphoros*. See Broadhead 1960, lv–lx, Culasso-Gastaldi 1979, 77–82, and Garvie 2009, xl–xlvi.

86 Some have thought to conflate them, but even Ovid *Ib.* 555–8 knew the difference: *Glauco ut alter ... modo nomen*; see Sommerstein 2012, 96–7.

grass instead of flesh).<sup>87</sup> The obvious connection of a Glaukos of Potniae to the *Persians* is that, as in *Glaukos Pontios*, Potnia neighbors Plataea, where the land-battle which bookended *Persians*' naval-battle of Salamis in the defeat of Xerxes' forces took place. Pushing the Persian Wars interpretation of the third play in the trilogy further, Hesychius (ξ74 s.v. Ξιφίρου λιμὴν) mentions that Aeschylus in *Glaukos Potnieus* (fr. 40a R) discussed a harbor. Strabo 6.258c cites an unnamed play of Aeschylus (fr. 402 R) for the idea that Rhegium is so-called from the time when Sicily was broken off from the mainland of Italy by an earthquake.<sup>88</sup> Sommerstein thus proposes that the trilogy should be read as a continuous narrative, with prophecies given and fulfilled across the plays, starting with Xerxes' yoking Europe and Asia and ending with Poseidon's separation of Sicily from Italy. Our surviving fragments of this play, however, seem to focus on the titular protagonist's competition in the funeral-games of Pelias and his *sparagmos* by his own horses.<sup>89</sup>

One fragment is particularly unable to be placed between the two *Glaukoi*: the scholia to Pindar quote καλοῖσι λουτροῖς ἐκλελουμένος δέμας εἰς ὑψίκρημον Ἰμέραν ἀφικόμην ("I washed my body in the beautiful baths and have arrived at craggy Himera," *Pyth.* 1.79 = fr. 25a R) from an unspecified *Glaukos*. If from *Pontios*, this epichoric reference could be little more than a recollection of peregrinations by Glaukos after he fell into the ocean, later to return as a sea-god.<sup>90</sup> Indeed, in Ovid's account (*Met.* 14.1–10), Euboean Glaukos would have passed near Himera during a journey which takes him from Aetna and through the Straits of Messina on the way up the western coast of Italy to Circe. These two poles, moreover—Aetna and Cumae—define the limits of Deinomenid geopolitical influence.<sup>91</sup> Geopoetically speaking, then, it becomes tempting to try to place this Himeraean fragment in relation to a Syracusan performance of both *Persians* and, somehow, *Glaukos (Potnieus)* in at least two ways. First of all, regardless of which *Glaukos* this scene belonged to, this vignette on the cliffs must have been treated in the *Scylla* of the Himeraean poet Stesichorus,

87 Asclepiades in his *Tragoidoumena* (BNJ 12 F1) identifies Glaukos of Potniae as the son of Sisypheus and relates the flesh version, likely to be from Aeschylus' play, whereas the mating version is preserved in Vir. *Georg.* 3.266–8 and Servius *ad loc.* Pausanias 6.20.19 identifies him as the Taraxippus at Isthmia.

88 Rhegium is given an etymology from the word ἀπορραγῆναι: "break off," an idea followed by many other authors; cf. De Angelis 2007: 316–20.

89 Sommerstein 2012. Perhaps a reference to Masistios' death at Plataea? Cf. Hdt. 9.22 and Broadhead 1960, lviii.

90 Fr. 402 R on Rhegium could fall among the *Pontios*' peregrinations as well.

91 Cf. Pind *Pyth.* 1.18 and Gantz 1974, 145.

whose poem on the return of Heracles with the cattle of Geryon told the story of the hero's rest-stop at Himera, which by the time of Diodorus (4.23, cf. 5.3) had become the *aition* for the very hot springs mentioned in the fragment. The return of the cattle of Geryon took Heracles not only through Himera but also to the Deinomenid-controlled Leontinian plain, as we saw above with the Palici. Secondly, Himera, of course, was the site of the decisive Deinomenid victory over the Carthaginians, which took place according to ancient tradition on the same day as the battle of Salamis and constituted the western half of a panhellenic victory over barbarian invaders.<sup>92</sup> Like Salamis and Cumae, it is mentioned in the same breath by Pindar with Plataea in *Pythian* 1 for Hieron, an ode celebrating the foundation of Aetna itself, the occasion of the *Aitnaiai*. This *Glaukos* fragment, perhaps, would have reminded anyone with a sense of history that standing on the bluffs of the upper town (ὕψις κρημνον) of Himera literally filled one's vision with the battlefield where the Deinomenids defeated the Carthaginians and raised a great temple in commemoration of their victory. Of this possibility Edward Freeman, writing his four-volume Oxford History of Sicily in the 1890's, interrupted himself dreamily with: "Let us for a moment fancy to ourselves the sacrifice of Hamilkar told in the verse of Aeschylus."<sup>93</sup> Given the ancient tradition of Salamis and Himera, it is clear why Aeschylus' *Persians* drives people to want for it a Sicilian counterpart.

### Aeschylus and Sicily

Greek culture was not the same in Italy and Sicily as it was in the Aegean or Ionia. Instead, local cults and mythology, religious and philosophical beliefs and practices, and the processes of politics, patronage, and transmission differed from region to region. Thus, just to the extent that we feel we are in the presence of Aeschylus the Athenian when we see reflections of democratic principles like *Marathonomachia* and Athenian festivals like the Dionysia in his works, can Aeschylus the Sicilian be seen when his works reveal the influence of poetic traditions, socio-religious frameworks, and political and intellectual contexts more associated with western Greeks? Maybe.<sup>94</sup>

The tradition of reading Aeschylus with regard to western epichoric influences started in antiquity. Cicero (*Tusc.* 2.23 Pohlenz), introducing a discussion of Prometheus fragments, said famously, *Veniat Aeschylus, non poeta*

92 Hdt. 7.166 and Arist. *Po.* 1459a24–7 (but cf. Diod. 11.23); see Gauthier 1966.

93 Freeman 1891, 2.280.

94 See, for example, the hyperskeptical account of Griffith 1978.



*solum, sed etiam Pythagoreus; sic enim accepimus.* Even though Prometheus' claim (*PV* 459–60) that καὶ μὴν ἀριθμόν, ἔξοχον σοφισμάτων, ἐξηῦρον αὐτοῖς sounds Pythagorean enough, Griffith argues that Cicero could not have told a Pythagorean from a Platonist, anyway.<sup>95</sup> Should the debate on maternal parentage in *Eumenides* 658–73 be read, as it often is, only in the context of Athenian parental ideology, when the debate on parentage is familiar from no less than six sixth-century philosophers, four of whom are from the Greek west, while none of them are Athenian? Could the claims about maternal parentage and education of the *pais margos* in the Dike fragment be related, too? Likewise, is the importance of eschatology in western Greek religion and philosophy responsible for the presence of “returns” of the Palici and/or the necromancy of Darius in both of the two plays for which Sicilian performance is attested? The cult of Demeter and Persephone is now increasingly held to be particularly close to the origins of theatrical performance in Sicily and Hieron, who held a hereditary priesthood of the eschatologically significant infernal goddesses Demeter and Persephone, sponsored both *Aitnaiai* and *Persians* in a theater which may have had an underground passageway specifically suitable for dramatizing eschatologically significant events like ghosts and divinities rising from the earth.<sup>96</sup>

In addition to local intellectual and spiritual traditions, Aeschylus was also in contact with a long-standing Sicilian poetic tradition with its own internal and external dynamics.<sup>97</sup> The sixth-century poetry of Stesichorus of Himera, for example, has been thought to lie behind elements of several Aeschylean plays. Certain elements of Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*—particularly language about the division of lots—matches narrative elements in the Lille Papyrus' account of Labdacid affairs.<sup>98</sup> Stesichorus' account of the travels of Heracles in the cup of the sun (*PMGF* fr. S17 Davies) and his account of Geryon's triple body (*PMGF* fr. S87 Davies) recur again in Aeschylus' *Heliades* (fr. 69 R, a play that dealt with Italy) and *Heraclidae* (fr. 74 R). But most significant is Stesichorus' apparent influence on the *Oresteia*: the role of Electra and Apollo in Orestes' revenge (*PMGF* fr. 217 Davies), the importance of the Nurse (*PMGF*

95 Griffith 1978, 110; For western Greek Orthopythagoreanism in Aeschylus, see Cataudella 1963, 11–7; for Pythagoreanism in the *Oresteia*, see Seaford 2012, 293–315.

96 See Boshier 2012, 104–5. On the infernal goddesses and performance traditions in Sicily, see Zuntz 1971, Boshier 2006, Kowalzig 2008, and MacLachlan 2012.

97 Smith 2012.

98 See Peron 1979, Thalmann 1982, and Wick 2003.

fr. 218 Davies), as well as Clytemnestra's dream of the snake (*PMGF* fr. 219 Davies ~ *Cho.* 523–50), and possibly her use of the axe in the murder.<sup>99</sup>

In addition to being influenced by earlier traditions, Aeschylus was interwoven into the intellectual and poetic fabric of his contemporary Sicily, with whose authors reciprocal influence is possible. Should we doubt that they and other poets met at the court of Hieron in Syracuse, or elsewhere in Sicily like Gela or Acragas, and shared a poetic culture of local themes with contemporary importance?<sup>100</sup> Pride of place next to Aeschylus among this group goes to Epicharmus and Pindar. In Sicilian poetic culture, what Aeschylus is to tragedy, Epicharmus is to comedy, and it is perhaps no surprise that, whether or not the two ever crossed paths in Sicily, a tradition developed about their works catching up with each other.<sup>101</sup> But because Aeschylus and Epicharmus overlapped on eight titles (*Atalantae*, *Bacchae*, *Philoctetes*, *Theoroi/Thearoi*, *Persians*, *Prometheus*, *Diktyoulkoi/Diktyes*, *Sphynx*), opportunities for comparison and/or confusion between the texts as they were received could have arisen early.<sup>102</sup> For example, the assumption is usually that, generically, comedy imitates or parodies tragedy.<sup>103</sup> Epicharmus is obviously responding to Aeschylus in the report of the scholia on Aeschylus' use of the word τιμαλφούμενον in *Eumenides* 626, that συνεχές τὸ ὄνομα παρ' Αἰσχύλῳ· διὸ σκώπτει αὐτὸν Ἐπίχαρμος ("This word is everywhere in Aeschylus. Accordingly, Epicharmus ridicules him").<sup>104</sup> However, in at least one case, the reverse may be true: Epicharmus wrote a *Diktyes*, perhaps copied by Aeschylus in his satyric *Diktyoulkoi*, which Lobel already upon its discovery in 1941 thought was full of

99 The debate on whether Clytemnestra's weapon was sword or axe has continued, from Fraenkel 1950 (3.806–9) to, so far, Prag 1991.

100 On the poetic culture of Deinomenid Sicily, see Taplin 2006, Boshier 2006, and Smith 2012.

101 On Epicharmus and Aeschylus, see Kerkhof 2001, 136–41, Willi 2008, 166–7, Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 2012, 85–6, and now Poehlmann 2015. Flintoff 1986 has now restated the case for a (very) early *PV* on the basis of Epicharmus' apparent knowledge of it.

102 See now Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 2012. Epicharmus' *Prometheus* or *Pyrrha* may have dramatized the landing of Deucalion and Pyrrha on the slopes of Mt. Aetna; cf. Hyg. *Fab.* 153, Kerkhof 2001, 136–40 and Shaw 2014, 66–7.

103 Cf. e.g. Shaw 2014, 66. Although classified among the "Pseudepicharmeia" by Kassel and Austin, the line τὸ δὲ γαμῖν ὁμοῖόν ἐστι τῷ τρις ἔξ ἢ τρεῖς μόνους ἀπὸ τύχης βαλεῖν (fr. 269.1–2 KA) would not make as fine of a joke if the audience does not know, e.g., that Aeschylus' *Oresteia* (*Ag.* 32–3) had started with the same dice roll.

104 The word is found only here in Epicharmus, and in Aeschylus (*Eum.* 115, 626, 807; *Ag.* 922) and Pindar, in an ode for Chromius (*Nem.* 9.54), which uses it to say ὑπὲρ πολλῶν τε τιμαλφεῖν λόγοις νίκαν "honoring your victory with words beyond any others"—an in-joke of the victory poet between the poets of Hieron's court?

Sicilianisms, possibly in parody of Epicharmus.<sup>105</sup> In other examples of apparent influence between the two, it can simply be hard to tell which came first: Aeschylus' οἱ πρῶτα μὲν βλέποντες ἔβλεπον μάτην, κλύοντες οὐκ ἤκουον (PV 447–8) or Epicharmus' νοῦς ὀρήϊ καὶ νοῦς ἀκούει· τᾶλλα κωφὰ καὶ τυφλά (fr. 214 KA)? And, what about οὔλος ὀράϊ, οὔλος δὲ νοεῖ, οὔλος δὲ τ' ἀκούει, by another Syracusan visitor, Xenophanes (21B 24 DK)? Or the word δυσπάλαιστος, which only appears in the "Pseudepicharmeia" (fr. 280. 5 KA) and no other author before Aeschylus (*Suppl.* 468 and *Cho.* 692)? Or Cassandra's yell ἴτ' ἐς φθόρον in Aeschylus (*Ag.* 1267) compared with Epicharmus' exclamation ἄπαγ' εἰς φθόρον (fr. 154 KA)?<sup>106</sup>

Furthermore, other people besides Aeschylus and Epicharmus themselves appear to have had plays by both authors at hand or in memory.<sup>107</sup> As we've seen above, when Aeschylus wasn't being cited on his own as an authority for native Sicilian cults, he was adduced by the scholia to Aristophanes' famous beetle-steed as practically as much of an authority on epichoric matters in eastern Sicily as Epicharmus himself. Eratosthenes of Cyrene is reported to have mentioned a performance of Aeschylus' *Persians* in Sicily in his work *On Comedy*; such mention of the tragedy in a work devoted to comedy could hypothetically have featured in a passage comparing Epicharmus' *Persians* with Aeschylus'.

Another fruitful example of the interaction between Epicharmus and Aeschylus is that both wrote plays entitled some variation of "Sacred Delegates," and these provoked so many similarly titled works among Syracusan authors that one wonders what made them so receptive to reinventions on this theme, even though there is no reason to think Aeschylus' play was performed in or for Sicily. Thucydides 6.3.1 tells us that Sicilian *theoroi* shared a special tradition departing from a common altar to Delphic Apollo Archegetes, suggesting how important these delegations were to Sicilian identity.<sup>108</sup> Although we don't know whether this place of origin was only for Naxian or for all Sicilian delegates, it is nevertheless noteworthy that it is a long chain of

105 See Lobel in POxy 18.2161; cf. *TrGF* 3.161–74.

106 See Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 2012, 86 n. 41. Cf. also Shaw 2014, 74–5 on intertextuality of sexual vocabulary between Epicharmus and Aeschylus' satyr plays.

107 Possibly seen in the papyrus commentaries on Epich. fr. 97 KA, which twice adduce (or at least mention) τοὺς τραγικούς?

108 Ἀπόλλωνος Ἀρχηγέτου βωμόν ὅστις νῦν ἔξω τῆς πόλεως ἐστὶν ἰδρύσαντο, ἐφ' ᾧ, ὅταν ἐκ Σικελίας θεωροὶ πλέωσι, πρῶτον θύουσιν. For Apollo Archegetes as Delphic (the god of colonization and therefore of all Greek Sicilians) and not Delian (i.e. Ionian and therefore only of the Naxians and their relatives), see Malkin 1986; for varieties of sacred *theoroi*, see Elsner and Rutherford 2005.

authors based in Syracuse who hand down mimetic performances dealing with the subject of similar delegations and their various destinations. So, Epicharmus wrote a comedy called *Θεαροί*, which seems to be about a visit to Apollo at Delphi (so Athen. 8.362b).<sup>109</sup> Aeschylus wrote a satyr play called *Θεωροί ἢ Ἰσθμιαστάι* (frs. 78–82 R), whose antefix-gawking chorus of satyrs may have been inspired by the incorporation of Silenus antefixes made at Gela and Naxos into the early religious architecture of Selinus and other sites by the early fifth century.<sup>110</sup> Aeschylus' satyr play probably contained the line εἶα δὴ σκοπεῖτε δῶμα ποντίου σεισίχθο[ος] ("Hey, check out the house of the Marine Earth-shaker!" fr. 78a.18 R), however, which makes it fairly clear that the destination was probably the temple of Poseidon at the Isthmus of Corinth rather than Apollo at Delphi.<sup>111</sup> Instead, then, of suggesting the Delphic god of colonization or panhellenic prophecy and dedication (which Sicilians were well in contact with), Aeschylus evokes Poseidon, the sea god of Corinth, suggesting either, again, panhellenic visitors to the shrine of Isthmian Poseidon, or the epichoric, inter-*polis* connections between Corinth and delegations to and from its greatest colony, Syracuse. Indeed, the two cities were even said (Σ Pind. *Ol.* 13.158ac) to share the same version of the Isthmian ritual. Also by the end of the 5th c. BCE, Sophron of Syracuse wrote a mime called *Θάμεναι τὰ Ἰσθμία* "Women delegated to view the Isthmian Festival" (*PCG* 1.200) which not only seems to have drawn on Aeschylean over Epicharmean tradition in its choice of destinations, but also, and in turn by the end of the 3rd c. BCE, to have been picked up by another Syracusan, Theocritus, for his *Idyll* 15 (a visit to the festival of the Adonia at Alexandria).<sup>112</sup>

It is perhaps the power of Aeschylus' poetic tradition at Syracuse that accounts for the anecdote in which Dionysius I, tyrant of Syracuse in the early 4th c., attempts to springboard his own failing career as a dramatic playwright by going to great pains to acquire Aeschylus' writing-desk (Lucian *Ind.* 15). To Lucian, the trope of the tyrant-poet is such that Dionysius' attempt to "buy in" to the physical basis for Aeschylus' success naturally just makes things go from bad to worse, and his writings instead became, apparently,

109 In Athens, Eur. *Ion* describes another "theoric" encounter with Delphi, one in which the identity of Xuthus is reinvented; Smith 2012 argues this play directly contests the Sicilian manipulations of Xuthus in Aeschylus and Stesichorus.

110 Marconi 2005.

111 See Görschen 1954, Di Marco, 1969/70, and Sutton 1981.

112 In addition to Eur. *Ion*, the pilgrim motif also makes its way into Herodas of Alexandria's *Mime* 4 (a visit to Asclepius at Cos), by the 3rd c. BCE and, possibly, into Euphron of Athens' *Θεωροί* by the 1st; cf. MacLachlan 2012, 356–7 and Shaw 2014, 56–77.

γελοιότερα “even more laughable.” Conversely, the tradition of the purchase could have coalesced around a different fact—namely, that after a lifetime of humiliating failures, Dionysius’ efforts with the tragic pen finally won him a victory at the Athenian Lenaia of, probably, 367.<sup>113</sup> What could have caused such a sudden and “dramatic” change for a Sicilian tyrant and tragic poet with Athenian interests, other than physical contact with Aeschylus’ own relics? Otherwise, the 4th c. saw a fairly strong showing by the Syracusan dramatic tradition in Attic contests—not only did Dionysius himself win at the Lenaia, but so did Akhaïos of Syracuse (*TrGF* 1.87), and Mamerkos of Katana (*TrGF* 1.79) is said to have considered himself, at least, a successful tragic poet as well (Plut. *Tim.* 31.1: ἐπὶ τῷ ποιήματι γράφειν καὶ τραγωδίας μέγα φρονῶν).

Aeschylus’ death at Gela, and the hero-cult which may have involved competitive performances of choral or tragic poetry there, presumably arose somehow from the close historical connections between Gela and Syracuse. The third city with close ethnic, political, and dynastic ties to both Gela and Syracuse is Acragas. Did Aeschylus spark off an Acragantine school of tragedians there (*PV* 803 Ζηνὸς ἀκραγείης κύνας notwithstanding)? Perhaps Carcinus I (*TrGF* 1.21, although probably an Athenian who won first at the Dionysia in 446), and certainly Carcinus II (*TrGF* 1.70, according to the *Suda* at least) were from Acragas, and the latter like Aeschylus probably wrote an *Oresteia* (70 fr. 1g R).<sup>114</sup> There are also parallels between the Aeschylean *Prometheus* plays and Empedocles’ philosophy, particularly in their cosmologies and element theories: compare, for example, Empedocles πῦρ καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ γαῖα καὶ ἠέρος ἄπλετον ὕψος (“Fire and Water and Earth and the boundless height of Air,” 31B 17.27 DK) to Aeschylus’ *Heliades* (fr. 70 R), “Zeus is αἰθήρ, Zeus is γῆ, Zeus is οὐρανός, and everything that comes after, too ...”.<sup>115</sup> According to Diogenes Laertius 8.57–8, Empedocles the philosopher also wrote a work called either the Διάβασις τοῦ Χέρξου or just *Persika*, and his collected works included tragedies known in Aristotle’s *On Poets* (fr. 70 Rose) as being “political,” although these may have belonged to his grandson, also apparently an Acragantine tragedian (*TrGF* 1.50; cf. *Suda* ε1001).<sup>116</sup> Aeschylus’ gravity could have pulled other western pre-Socratics into his orbit of reception as well. So, for example, Capizzi argues that Parmenides may have seen *Aitnaiai* and *Heliades* produced in the west, and picked up from them ideas about coming to meet Dike in the Chariot of the Sun, and Focke proposed that Gorgias’ *Palamedes* (82B 11a.12–4 DK) could have

113 Cf. Diod. 15.74 and Duncan 2012.

114 See Wilson 2007, 362 and Bock 1958, 412.

115 Herington 1963.

116 Sider 1982, who points to *Persika* as a *lectio difficilior* for *Physika*.

borrowed its panhellenic tone from Aeschylus' *Persians* (e.g. 402–5).<sup>117</sup> Griffith admits a litany of sophistic influences in *Prometheus*, although it is worth remembering that, to advance his influential argument for a late and therefore non-Aeschylean play, he could hardly do otherwise.<sup>118</sup>

It is rarely recalled that *Aitnaiai* (and *Persians* to a lesser extent) remains one of the earliest dated Greek dramatic performances. Thus, it is no exaggeration to say that much of Greek drama unfolded in its shadow to some extent. How powerful was the aitiology of the Palici (and that of Dike?) on later dramaturgy—particularly, as above, on the *Eumenides*? Where else might such dramatic techniques first tested in Sicily have later manifested themselves? It is not inappropriate that all future finds of Aeschylus be weighed against the possibility, at least, of Sicilian influence.

### Conclusion: The Reception of Aeschylus in Sicily

This essay has tried to show who knew what when and how, rather than to offer a unified interpretation about what Aeschylus in Sicily might have meant at every given time and place. However, there are some points of interest and puzzlement that arise by looking at the pattern of testimonies and silences across various eras. In the Late Antique period, it seems that authors like Macrobius and Stephanus are citing from a group of Hellenistic authors on the Palici whose sources we presume included Aeschylus. Yet our only book-fragments and references to the *Aitnaiai* come from this same period or later: Macrobius, John Lydus, Stephanus of Byzantium, Hesychius, the scholia to Homer, and the *Vita Aeschyli*. In the Byzantine period, Eustathius' enthusiasm for Aeschylus in Sicily is mostly due to his enthusiasm for Athenaeus;<sup>119</sup> however, there are certainly numerous other examples in Athenaeus besides Aeschylus' use of Sicilian pig-words that the bishop did not bring up on multiple occasions.

What can we say? There is no direct, explicit evidence for Aeschylus in Sicily before the end of the Classical Period. Was his Sicilianicity, then, a product of the Hellenistic Age? Our earliest attestation of his presence in Sicily is indeed the Parian Marble, which gives away its own agenda because it does so not just once but twice: not only does it place Aeschylus in Sicily, it also

<sup>117</sup> Capizzi 1982; Focke 1930, 302.

<sup>118</sup> Griffith 1977, 217–24.

<sup>119</sup> Van der Walk 1971, lxxix–lxxxv.

says Sappho went to Sicily. In its accounts, both poets line up with a famous historical regime at Syracuse: Sappho with the Gamoroi, Aeschylus with the Deinomenids.<sup>120</sup> Despite raising our eyebrows, the Parian Marble was surely an influential disseminator of traditions in antiquity. The reception of Sicilian Aeschylus in literary epigram during the Roman Imperial and Second Sophistic periods, on the other hand, may be partially based on the identity of the reporting author, if it is not accidental that the Atticizing non-Greeks Athenaeus and Pausanias enforce Aeschylus *Marathonomachos*, while Plutarch—himself a non-Attic Greek—happily allows Aeschylus *Siculus*. Imperial Rome, moreover, obsessed with the role of language in its discourses about *Romanitas* versus ethnic and local identities, not surprisingly sees the explicit emergence of Aeschylus' Sicilian *patois* as evidence for his Sicilianicity.<sup>121</sup> It also sees the explicit emergence of the “tyrant's patronage” motif, probably with origins in the Hellenistic period. It can be no surprise that local elites in autocratic periods of Hellenistic Greece and Imperial Rome (Athenaeus was from Egypt, Pausanias from Lydia, Plutarch from Greece) promoted a Sicilian Aeschylus who was—like themselves—patronized in a world of autocracy, and whose identity—like theirs—was based on a mastery of second-language vocabulary.

So, too, the modern era has continued to supply different agendas which seek to establish the extent to which Aeschylus could have been, in some way, Sicilian. While western Europeans in the 17th to 19th centuries embraced a Sicilian Aeschylus, perhaps as part of their interest in the Sicily and Magna Graeca of the Grand Tour, western Europeans in the 20th and 21st centuries have largely dismissed the Sicilian Aeschylus, perhaps because he detracts from Athenian literature's role in the ideological makeup of liberal western democracies. Italianophone scholarship has, naturally, embraced a Sicilian Aeschylus. Even at the local level, the Geloan erudites who in 1848 and again in 1948 thought they had found evidence of a theater in Gela near Torre Insinga al Caricatore are said to have been “affected by the local fixation with finding traces of Aeschylus and the alleged theatre where his plays were supposedly performed,”<sup>122</sup> “un'idea fissa per i moderni Gelesi.”<sup>123</sup> However, despite numerous claims that Gela actually had or simply “must have had” a theater, proof remains elusive.<sup>124</sup> Not having found one, though, the Gelesi were not

120 On Sappho in Sicily, see *BNJ* 239 F A36 and Smith forthcoming.

121 See Swain 1998, 17–100.

122 Poli Palladini 2013, 88.

123 Griffo 1951, 14.

124 Battaglia 1957.

content to be without one, and constructed their Teatro comunale Eschilo performance venue in 1832, one of the first for a small city in Sicily. Since the early twentieth century, Aeschylus has been reperformed as part of the cycle of ancient dramatic productions at the ancient Greek theater in Siracusa by the Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico. After 100 years of performances of the Greek dramatists (1914–2014), Aeschylus is least popular in reperformance, but trails only by a bit. While plays from the *Oresteia* dominate INDA's performances of Aeschylus, *Prometheus* and *Persians* have been slightly more popular than *Seven* and *Suppliants*.

How Sicilian do we want Aeschylus to be? The quantity of ancient material and modern scholarship says a lot for the maximal hypothesis; we do not have similar quantities for a Sicilian Sophocles or a Sicilian Euripides.<sup>125</sup> On the one hand, Phrynichus' alleged death in Sicily (T6 S) and Euripides' supposed *proxenia* of Syracuse are from sources so late (an anonymous treatise on comedy and the scholia to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*), and line up before and after Aeschylus in a doxographic chain so perfect, that it seems unwise to accept all sources as equally accurate.<sup>126</sup> On the other, with the evidence we do have, we would probably be on solid enough ground to hold on to and speculate about Sicilian influence and reception if we were dealing with any less important—or any less importantly Athenian—author than Aeschylus. But, in the end, must our interest in Aeschylus *Siculus* be all or nothing? What if the project were to start “thinking away” some of the latest or weakest links in the Sicilian chain of evidence, in order to discover whether there is a minimum “keystone” piece of evidence on which the Sicilian Aeschylus entirely hangs—the *Vita*, maybe? The *Frogs* scholia? The Parian Marble? Or maybe the golden ideal of Hieron's patronage that started with Pindar? What would it take to minimize the case for a Sicilian Aeschylus to the point where our account became: Aeschylus merely made mention of the Palici and a few other Sicilian things in an Athenian production and a false biographical interpretation snowballed out from there? Decoupling Hieron would indeed allow for Aeschylus in Sicily's most minimal reading: that *Persians* in Syracuse was merely a later reperformance at best, and that *Aitnaiai* need only have been performed in Athens.<sup>127</sup>

125 Sophocles: Vanotti 1979, Zacharia 2003; Euripides: Burelli 1979.

126 See Cagnazzi 1993.

127 For Kate Boshier, whose version would have been better.



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# The Comedians' Aeschylus

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## Aeschylus: Father of Tragedy and Braggart (*Alazōn*)

Aristophanes' elder contemporaries, Kratinos and Pherekrates, who won their first victories at the City Dionysia somewhere between 456 and 437 BCE,<sup>1</sup> initiated comic veneration of Aeschylus.<sup>2</sup> Aeschylus' tragedies and fame persisted in the generations after his death in 456; qualities associated with the "classic" were attributed to his poetic craftsmanship and theatrical skill. Comedians sought to wear the mantle of his poetic immortality. The *de Comoedia* reports that Kratinos "became superlatively poetic, fashioning himself in the character of Aeschylus" (3.20–4 Koster = *PCG* 4 *test.* 2.a11).<sup>3</sup> Pherekrates presented Aeschylus boasting in the underworld "I was the one who completed the construction of a great art and bequeathed it to them (*sc.* the tragedians of today)" (ὅστις γ' αὐτοῖς παρέδωκα τέχνην μεγάλην ἐξοικοδομήσας, *Krapataloi* fr. 100). In Aristophanes' *Frogs*, Dionysos addresses Aeschylus as "first of the Hellenes to build towers of majestic expressions and to adorn tragic nonsense ..." (ἀλλ' ὦ πρῶτος τῶν Ἑλλήνων πυργώσας ῥήματα σεμνὰ/ καὶ κοσμήσας τραγικὸν λῆρον ..., 1004–5).<sup>4</sup> The comedians' Aeschylus is the father of tragedy and architect of a majestic form of art.

Aristophanes too identified himself with Aeschylus. He asserts his own achievement as founder of a great poetic and dramatic art in terms that echo Pherekrates' Aeschylus. The chorus of the *Peace* declares that Aristophanes "made a great art for us, and built it to towering heights with big words and thoughts and jests that aren't vulgar" (ἐποίησε τέχνην μεγάλην ἡμῖν ἀπύργωσ'

1 All dates are BCE unless otherwise noted.

2 The date of Kratinos' first victory at the City Dionysia is unknown. IG II<sup>2</sup> 2325.50 places it three years before Kallias' (between 453 and 446, IG II<sup>2</sup> 2318.294). This makes 449 the *terminus ante quem* for Kratinos' first victory; cf. Bakola 2010, 2–4. The date of Pherekrates' first victory in 437 hinges on Dobree's emendation of *de Com.* 3.29 (Koster) = *PCG* 7 *test.* 2.a6.

3 See Bakola 2010, esp. 29, 177. A *Eumenides* was attributed to Kratinos, but the title may be a mistaken reference to *Euneidai*; see Storey 2011, 160.

4 Halliwell 2011, 122 with n.29, takes "nonsense" (λῆρον) as characterizing Aeschylus' poetry. However, it probably characterizes tragic language, as Σ *Ran.* 1005c realized, glossing "nonsense" as "instead of art" (ἀντὶ τοῦ τέχνην); cf. Walsh 1984, 95.

οικοδομήσας/ ἔπεσιν μεγάλους καὶ διανοίαις καὶ σκώμμασιν οὐκ ἀγοραίοις, 749–50).<sup>5</sup> Aristophanes lays claim to a status comparable to Aeschylus': builder of poetic fortification towers and founder of a monumental dramatic art. Moreover, Aristophanes depicted his revised *Clouds* as Aeschylus' Electra, a "naturally ... self-controlled" (537) girl in search of "spectators ... so skilled" (θεαταῖς ... οὕτω σοφοῖς, 535). Aristophanes' "Electra" will recognize such spectators in reperformance, just as Aeschylus' Electra recognized her brother Orestes by a lock of his hair (536).<sup>6</sup> If Euripides' and/or Sophocles' *Electra* had been presented by this time, Aristophanes could explicitly favor Aeschylus' Electra over the other tragedians' characters, endorsing a form of recognition that Sophocles ignored and Euripides' title character debunked (*El.* 524–31).<sup>7</sup>

In fr. 100 of the *Krapataloi*, Pherekrates' Aeschylus implies that his heirs failed to maintain the standard he established. In a fragment of an unknown Aristophanic play, Aeschylus hints at the narrow artistry of contemporary tragedians, boasting "I used to devise the dance moves for my choruses myself" (fr. 696). His interlocutor replies: "I know because I watched the *Phrygians*. When they came to help Priam ransom his dead son, [I saw them] dancing lots of moves like this one and this one even to here" (*ibid.*).<sup>8</sup> Aeschylus' vaunt is an occasion for parody of his dance routines. The mimicry may have featured stupendous displays of flexibility, high kicks, whirling, and crouching similar to those Philokleon and the sons of Karkinos exhibit in the *Wasps* (1487–95, 1516–31). Such "crazed" (1486, 1497) dancing, associated with the old-time tragedians Thespis and Phrynichos (1474–81, 1523–7), may also have been associated with Aeschylus.<sup>9</sup>

Dikaiopolis' anguish when he "stood with open mouth awaiting Aeschylus, and the herald announced, 'Theognis, bring on your chorus!'" (*Ar. Ach.* 9–11), demonstrates how the name of Aeschylus signals ridicule of present-day tragic artistry in comedy. Theognis exemplifies the awfulness of contemporary

5 Geissler 1925, 39 conjectured that Pherekrates' *Krapataloi* preceded *Peace*.

6 See Hackforth 1938. We cannot rule out a joke at the audience's expense: Aeschylus' Electra could not really recognize Orestes this way, so a revised *Clouds* will not recognize the skilled spectators it needs. In general, see Hubbard 1991, esp. 88–102.

7 Newiger 1961, esp. 425–7. Uncertainty of the dates of Sophocles' and Euripides' plays makes the thesis unverifiable. For the date of the play, see Zuntz 1963, 64–71; Cropp 1988, 1–li; Roisman/Luschnig 2012, 28–32.

8 For criticism of tragic dance in comedy, see Pl.Com. *Skeuai* fr. 138. Whittaker 1935, 186 identifies the speaker as Aeschylus. Becker 1915, 63 and Pirrotta 2009, 278 hesitate to make this identification.

9 I agree with MacDowell 1971, esp. 323, that the dances at the end of the *Wasps* parody tragic dances. For different views, see Lawler 1964, 56–8, and Borthwick 1968.

tragedy: he bore the nickname “Snow” for his chillingly horrible poetry.<sup>10</sup> The pretext of the *Frogs* is the collapse of tragedy after the death of Euripides—his successors are “defilers of the art” who “piss on tragedy” (92–5). However, the play uses Aeschylus to build a case against Euripides as the source of degeneration: he introduced beggar kings, deviant and promiscuous female sexuality, and sullied the grandeur of tragic artistry; he made the audience morally worse (1006–98). Aeschylus fulminates: “After I devised and taught the art well, you defiled it” (1062). The play’s chorus excoriates Euripides for “throwing out *mousikē* and neglecting the greatest part of the tragic art” (1490–5).

The comedians’ Aeschylus is both the father of high tragic artistry who decries the diminution of the art form he built and a sour, primitive, obsolete, ranting, braggart (*alazōn*). A scene in the *Clouds* (*Nub.* 1321–79) pits a chain of kindred terms—time-honored custom, Simonides, Aeschylus, poetic wisdom and skill, and ethical moderation—against modern fads, Euripides, sophistic ingenuity, and their concomitant deformations of culture and morality. After feasting his son Pheidippides upon his return from the tutelage of the Weaker Logos in Socrates’ school, Strepsiades asks him to sing and play the lyre. Pheidippides rejects such singing as old-fashioned and degrading—the sort of thing women grinding parched barley would do (1357–8).<sup>11</sup> He declares that his father deserves a beating for asking him to sing as if he were feasting cicadas (1359–60), a jibe at singing (male cicadas are prolific chirpers) and at an obsolete practice (“cicadas” are an archaic aristocratic male hair ornament).<sup>12</sup>

Pheidippides rejects Simonides as a “bad poet” (1362) and denounces Aeschylus by paying lip service to his status as a classic: “I think Aeschylus is first among poets—full of noise, completely unpolished, a ranter and a pompous fool” (literally “crag-maker”; 1366–7). The youth’s outburst angers Strepsiades; but he controls himself (1367–8) and invites his son to recite “something from one of those newer poets, all that clever stuff” (1369–70). Pheidippides recites a speech from Euripides’ *Aiolos* relating how “a brother was banging his sister from the same mother” (1372–3); Strepsiades can no longer control his anger and rebukes his son. After an escalating altercation, Pheidippides beats his father; Strepsiades’ failure to praise Euripides as “most clever” (σοφώτατον, 1378)

10 Σ REFLh to *Ach.* 11 contains most of what we know about Theognis. See further Ar. *Ach.* 135–40, *Thesm.* 170; Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.2. For “frigid” (ψυχρός) as a term of literary criticism, see Kaimio/Nykopp 1997, 27–9 (with further bibliography).

11 For grinding-women’s songs, see Karanika 2015, 144–53.

12 Cicadas singing: Ar. *Av.* 339–41; hair ornament equivalent to “old-fashioned”: Ar. *Nub.* 984–5; cf. Thuc. 1.6.3; Ar. *Eq.* 1322–34.

justifies his action and Strepsiades is unable to gainsay Pheidippides without incurring another beating (1378–9).

Pheidippides' assessment of Aeschylus anticipates Euripides' criticism in the *Frogs*, for Euripides too impugns Aeschylus for composing "craggs the size of horses, which are not easy to understand" (929–30).<sup>13</sup> The volume, mass, sweeping force, emotional charge, and obscurity of Aeschylus' language are constants in comic depictions of his poetic style.<sup>14</sup> Pheidippides' judgment is identical to that of the *Frogs*' mob of criminals—which includes father-beaters (*Ran.* 773). The mob's adulation, which encourages Euripides to challenge Aeschylus for possession of the chair of tragedy in Hades, is also predicated on the belief that Euripides is "most clever" (ἀννόμισαν σοφώτατον, 776). Unsympathetic and delegitimated characters praise Euripides as superlatively skilled, wise, and clever (σοφώτατος)—the criminal element of Hades crazy for Euripides' rhetorical twists and turns (*Ar. Ran.* 757–813); Euripides, usurper of Aeschylus' throne of tragic artistry in Hades (e.g. 907–15, 919–47); Pheidippides after sophistic programming (*Nub.* 1321–79). Such criticism is a mark of intellectual and ethical failing and of a piece with comic ridicule of the moral quality of Euripidean tragedy (*Ar. Ran.* 850, 1081, 1475 and further discussion below). To reject Aeschylus is to scorn tried-and-true principles of Athens' preeminent art form and to scorn traditional Athenian values and practices in social relations, religion, politics, and morality.

In the *Frogs*, Euripides dismisses Aeschylus' dramaturgy as a sham and his poetry as turgid and artless verbiage. His first charge against Aeschylus is that "he is a braggart (ἀλαζών) and a fraud (φέναξ), because of the kinds of tricks he used to deceive unsophisticated spectators reared on Phrynichos" (909–10); he brought on mute characters to sit with their heads covered while the chorus piled on odes (914–5, 919–20).<sup>15</sup> Euripides uses one factor to explain Aeschylean dramaturgy: "empty boastfulness" (ὕπ' ἀλαζονείας, 919). Aeschylus' silences waste time and induce trivial suspense about when a main character will speak. The fraud becomes clear when the character finally speaks: the

13 Cf. Pl.Com. *Lakones or Poetai* fr. 69: a character says that whenever he needs a "cornerstone phrase" (γωνιαίου ῥήματος) he stands next to a person ("him") and "pries up rocks." Meineke (*PCGF* 233) thought the hapless tragedian Sthenelos uttered this line and that "him" referred to Aeschylus; see fr. 72 for play's mockery of Sthenelos as a plagiarist with Pirrotta 2009, 164–7. For Aeschylean diction as a massive and harmful "crowning cornerstone phrase" see *Ar. Ran.* 851–5.

14 For Aristophanes' Aeschylus as an exemplar of the *genus grande*, see O'Sullivan 1992, esp. 8–10; cf. 106–29 on the style.

15 See Taplin 1972.

drama is half over and the character's few massive words ("twelve words the size of oxen") sport frightening brows and crests, terrorizing the uncomprehending audience (923–6).

Aeschylus' colossal words and frightening warriors are instruments of violence.<sup>16</sup> In the *Frogs*, Aeschylus' words are baleful forces of nature—a whirlwind (847–8), hailstorm (851–5), a stream in flash flood (902–4, 1005)—instilling fear and inflicting physical harm (853–5). Aeschylus himself cuts a menacing figure. He suffers from an anger that challenges his self-control and verges on madness. Dionysos tries to quell his silent rage at the start of the *agōn*, ordering him not to "heat your guts to the point of rage with wrath" (...μὴ πρὸς ὀργὴν σπλάγχχνα θερμῆνις κότῳ, 844).<sup>17</sup> Aeschylus reacts to the plot to unseat him as a grievous slight to his honor, growing enraged like a bull (803–4).<sup>18</sup>

Scholars have noted that the *Frogs*' Aeschylus is modeled on Homer's and Aeschylus' Achilles.<sup>19</sup> Yet Aeschylus also demonstrates Odysseus' cunning. Though he despises Euripides as the son of a mother who sells wild greens, as poet of mere talk, of beggars in rags (840–2) and of whores, he himself is querulous in the manner of bread-sellers (858). And he issues the command to weigh his and Euripides' verses on scales—despite Dionysos' objection that it would be tantamount to "selling the art of poets like cheese" (1369; cf. 798). Dionysos notes that Aeschylus adopts the ruses of a crooked retailer, throwing a word laden with moisture, "river" (ποταμός), into his verse, as a wool dealer drenches his product before he weighs it (1386). At the decisive moment of the *Frogs*, Aeschylus rather than Euripides tries to escape from Hades without completing the contest (1461). Aeschylus uses all resources at his disposal to defend his honor. His anger is a sign of his moral value.

Undermining Aeschylus' authority consists chiefly in rejecting his right to criticize his successors by depicting his speech as empty boasting. In the *Frogs*, Euripides depicts Aeschylus as the personification of the "boast" (κόμπος)—language that secures no reference to reality but induces fear. The root of the word "boast" (κομπ-) appears more frequently in Aeschylus than in other tragedians.<sup>20</sup>

16 See also Ar. *Lys.* 185–97.

17 This word for "wrath" (κότος), is uniquely Aeschylean and applies primarily to divinities. See Charlesworth 1926, 4. Anger (θυμός) drives Aeschylus outside the bounds of sense (literally, the "racecourse"), see 993–1003. See further 851–9, 1006–7.

18 For anger as a painful slight to one's honor, see Arist. *Rh.* 1378a30–3; Konstan 2006, 41–76.

19 E.g. Tarkow 1982.

20 22 times in six plays and one fragment. The *Seven against Thebes* features the root 12 times; this perhaps influenced reception of him as the poet of "boasts" (κομπάσματα). Euripides uses κομπ- 27 times in 18 plays and three fragments; Sophocles uses it 11 times in seven plays.

As a doctor/sophist, Euripides claims to have drained Aeschylus' bloated art of tragedy (*Ran.* 939–43):

But as soon as I took over from you an art bloated by boasts (οἰδοῦσαν ὑπὸ κομπασμάτων) and excessive expressions, I first of all dried it out and reduced its weight with little words, constitutional walks, and a mild laxative, giving it the salubrious juice of smart-aleck talk I gleaned from books.

Euripides' use of the word κομπάσματα for "boasts" is pointed, for during the classical period the word appears elsewhere only in the surviving works of Aeschylus (*Sep.* 551, 794; cf. [A.] *PV* 361) and in a phrase attributed to the comedian Kantharos, "boasts the size of wagons" (*Tereus* fr. 8).<sup>21</sup> Euripides uses the term to define Aeschylus' persona and dramatic style. In addition to his crude dramaturgy, the word impugns Aeschylus' inartistic use of incomprehensible words (*Ran.* 836–9, 923–6, 1056–7) and his evocation of monstrous images outside the range of human experience—"tawny horsecocks" and "goat-stags"—the kinds of figures that are woven into Persian tapestries (927–9, 937–8; cf. 833–4).<sup>22</sup> Aeschylus' majesty is barbarous and meaningless.

According to Euripides, the effect of Aeschylus' inflated diction and imagery is mind-destroying fear (ἔκπληξις). He claims: "... I didn't used to shout boasts, dragging the audience away from sense, nor did I strike their wits from them by depicting Kuknoses and Memnons on horses outfitted with belled caparisons" (... οὐκ ἔκομπολάκουν/ ἀπὸ τοῦ φρονεῖν ἀποσπάσας, οὐδ' ἐξέπληττον αὐτούς, / ..., 961–3). Euripides depicted "familiar things, which we use, which we understand, from which I could be refuted. For people who know them too could refute my art" (959–61). One of Euripides' favorite words in the *Frogs* is the verb ἐλέγχω ("I refute") and its compounds. He prays to his new gods—"Ether, my fodder, tongue's pivot, and olfactory nostrils—to refute correctly the arguments I assail" (892–4).<sup>23</sup> Euripides claims to have added intellectual rigor and rhetorical sophistication to tragedy (e.g. 955–8, 971–9). Aeschylean poetry is a

21 Kantharos might be mocking Aeschylus in this fragment. Cf. "speaking boasts by the cord (sc. of wood)" (κομποφαλεχρορήμονα, *Ran.* 839), 961, quoted below.

22 For the "tawny horsecock" in comic mockery of *milites gloriosi*, see below p. 66.

23 See also 908, 922. Aeschylus must be enjoined to refute his adversary rather than to engage in billingsgate like a bread-seller (856–9). Euripides also favors the word "test" (βασανίζω, 801–2, 1119–23); cf. the characterization of Euripides at 826–7: "a slick tongue, a verse-tester (ἐπὼν βασανίστρια)."

pompous nullity: its depictions cannot be verified or falsified by experience; its frightening boasts suppress thought.

By the end of the *Frogs*, Euripides, rationalist outlook aligns him with the Socratic *elenchus* rather than with tragedy and *mousikē* (*Ran.* 1491–9).<sup>24</sup> Euripides values poetry as an accurate depiction of ordinary experience. Using abstract terms for knowledge, inquiry, and understanding, Euripides reduces his own intellectualist bent to absurdity, claiming his poetry makes members of his audience “... manage their households better than before and ask, ‘How is this? Where is that thing of mine? Who took that?’”<sup>25</sup> Euripides boasts that his superior dramatic economy made efficient use of ordinary characters (948–53); but this came at the cost of reducing dramatic speech to chitchat (λαλιά) and smart-aleck talk (στωμυλία).<sup>26</sup>

The *Frogs* endorses a higher standard for tragic poetry than an accurate rendering of everyday experience and education in household management. This is apparent from the chorus’ address to Aeschylus “the first of the Hellenes to build towers of majestic phrases” (*Ran.* 1004). The play works toward understanding tragic poetry as an elevated language and public good (1008–9, 1029–36, 1053–6, 1418–21, 1435–6, 1482–90, 1500–3). In addition to exhibiting grandeur in language and costume (esp. 1056–88), tragic artistry inculcates musicality (797, 873, 1300; cf. 1298–1365, 1493 for Euripides’ deficiencies) and can improve the audience and civic population (1008–17; see 1010–17, 1043–98 for Euripides’ failings). The wisdom and intelligence of the tragic poet convey military virtue (1014–42) and contribute to civic wellbeing and civilization (1029–36). These communal factors transcend the private pleasure and longing for its return that animate Dionysos’ quest to retrieve Euripides from Hades at the outset of the *Frogs* (52–107).

The outlines of the comic tradition of praise and parody of Aeschylus—and the limits of parody—are discernible. The next question to ask is: how do the comedians know their Aeschylus?

24 Cf. O’Sullivan 1992, 9, “... Aeschylus is the real poet.... Euripides is almost an anti-poet.” Comedians tend to depict Euripides as everything but a poet. See further below.

25 Cf. Dionysos’ response (980–90) and Ar. *Thesm.* 417–28.

26 “Chit-chat”: 954; cf. 91, 815, 1069, 1492; cf. 915–6; contrast Aeschylus, 839; “smart-aleck talk”: 841, 943, 1069, 1071, 1160; cf. 1310. See also Ar. *Nub.* A fr. 392.



### Comic Knowledge of Aeschylus: Texts and Reperformances?

It is tempting to posit revivals of Aeschylus' plays around the time of the *Acharnians* (425), and many scholars do so.<sup>27</sup> The prologue of the *Acharnians* (9–12) entails some sort of reperformance. That Theognis was called to present his tragedy instead of someone mounting Aeschylus' plays induced Dikaiopolis' anguish.<sup>28</sup> Aristophanes' *Frogs* (405) implies that Aeschylus' plays were performed after his death. Aeschylus complains that a contest between himself and Euripides in Hades would be unfair: his poetry did not die with him, but Euripides' did. Aeschylus' plays remain in the world of the living as scripts for performance. Euripides can recite his plays from texts (*Ran.* 866–9).<sup>29</sup> The claim in the *Life of Aeschylus* 12 that “the Athenians enjoyed Aeschylus so much that after his death they decreed that the person willing to present his plays would get a chorus” need not be invoked to explain posthumous performances of Aeschylus' plays.<sup>30</sup> While Zachary Biles makes a convincing case for rejecting the historicity of this decree,<sup>31</sup> there is no reason to reject the tradition of reperformance even in the absence of the decree. Although they are unlikely to have been performed at the City Dionysia, Aeschylus' plays could have been restaged at Rural Dionysia.<sup>32</sup> The Athenians instituted the presentation of “old drama” (παλαιὸν δράμα) at the City Dionysia “for the first time” in 386.<sup>33</sup>

Among the extant plays, *Persians* has a good claim to reperformance. It is indisputable that the play provided material for comedians in the 420s: Eupolis

27 Newiger 1961, esp. 427–9 infers a restaging of the *Oresteia* in the 420s from alleged correspondences between the plays of the trilogy and the *Clouds*; others have attributed influence of the *Persians* on the *Acharnians* to possible revivals of that play in 420s. See Hall 1996, 2; Olson 2002, 68–9. Beazley 1939, esp. 625–7 posited a restaging of the satyr play that accompanied the *Persians*, *Prometheus Pyrkaeus*, based on three vases decorated with Prometheus and satyrs dated between 440 and 420. Aesch. *Prometheus Pyrkaeus* fr. 210 and Kratin. *Archilochoi* fr. 10 both use a rare word for unworked flax (ὠμόλινον).

28 Brockmann 2003, 27–41, 123–7, however, imagines that Theognis was called to the stage to present the *Persians* with the backing of Kleon.

29 Cf. Revermann 2006, 72–3. In the *Frogs*, Dionysos' “longing” (πόθος) arises while he reads a text of the *Andromeda* (48–54). See further below.

30 Other sources for the decree can be found in *TrGF* 3.T 73–7 and Csapo/Slater 11–2. See Lamari 2015, 191–200.

31 Biles 2006/2007, 206–20.

32 See esp. Csapo 2004a, esp. 57–73; cf. Biles 2006/2007, 226–7.

33 IG II<sup>2</sup> 2318.201–3; *DFA*<sup>2</sup> 124; Csapo 2004b, 69–73; Nervegna 2007, 15–18.

(*Marikas* fr. 207) and Plato (fr. 226) quote lyrics from the parodos and exodos respectively; ascertaining the source of their citations remains a challenge. Verbal allusions do not entail reperformances;<sup>34</sup> these could derive from texts, sympotic performances, or memorization at school.<sup>35</sup> Iron-clad evidence for the reperformance of Aeschylus' plays is hard to find. However, Robert Ketterer argues that Aristophanes modeled the exodos of the *Acharnians* on that of the *Persians*.<sup>36</sup> This modeling would have been based on a revival of the play, for it is entirely performative. There are few certain verbal resonances between the two exodoi, nor does the *Acharnians*' exodos take the form of a *kommos*.<sup>37</sup>

Aristophanic characters claim to have seen performances of Aeschylus' plays. It is impossible to determine what Dionysos witnessed while watching the *Persians*: "I, at any rate, was delighted when †I heard about† dead Dareios, and the chorus immediately clapped its two hands together like this and said 'iauo!' (*Ran.* 1028–9).<sup>38</sup> Dionysos may have felt delight at something he heard the ghost of Dareios say (e.g. future victory at Plataia as punishment for the Persian destruction of Athenian temples). Perhaps Dareios' spectacular arrival and the chorus' awestruck reaction to it—if the old men clapped their hands and said "iauo!"—delighted him. Typically, however, clapping is a gesture of approval; it appears to be a sign of anguish here. Moreover, Dionysos claims that the chorus utters "iauo!," an exclamation found neither in the manuscripts of the *Persians* nor elsewhere in extant Greek literature.<sup>39</sup> These peculiarities make it difficult to infer much from the passage. Dionysos may garble a version of the original production or fabricate one; he may have seen a revival of the play that embellished the original and featured clapping and *iauo!*. As discussed above, a speaker in Aristophanes fr. 696 claims that he knows Aeschylus choreographed his plays "... because I watched the *Phrygians*." It is likely that Aeschylus' choreography could be seen only at the original production. Whether the claim is based upon an actual or imaginary viewing of the original or of a reperformance is impossible to ascertain.

34 As Newiger 1961 and some scholars reported in *TrGF* 3.56–5 (*test.* Gm) assume.

35 For Aristophanes as a reader, see Wright 2012, esp. 141–71. For the performance of Aeschylus at symposia, see *Ar. Nub.* 1364–65 (discussed above); cf. *Gerytades* fr. 161. For Kratinos' songs sung in symposia, see *Ar. Eq.* 529–30. Phrynichos' songs continued to be sung and his choreography mimicked (*Vesp.* 219–20, 268–70, 1478–81, 1490, 1523–5).

36 Ketterer 1991.

37 Brockmann 2003, 42–5, attempts to find verbal resonances throughout *Ach.* and *Pers.*

38 "I heard about" (ἤκουσα περὶ) does not fit the meter. See Dover 1993, 320–1; Garvie 2009, lii–lvii, 264–5.

39 On the possibility of this belonging to a Sicilian version of the play, see Smith, this volume.

In the *Wasps*, Philokleon claims that if a certain Oiagros is on trial, he cannot win acquittal until he selects the most beautiful speech from the *Niobe* and recites it (*Vesp.* 579–80). As a scholiast to *Wasps* 579 remarks, whether Oiagros would be required to recite a speech from Aeschylus' or Sophocles' *Niobe* is unknown. Aeschylus' play is a more plausible candidate than Sophocles' since neither Aristophanes nor his fellow comedians refer to Sophocles' *Niobe* in their extant work. The *Wasps*' reference to *Niobe* without authorial attribution suggests Aeschylus' play: Aristophanes twice singles out and once quotes Aeschylus' *Niobe* in the *Frogs* (911–22, 1322); he quotes it also in the *Birds* (1247–8 with  $\Sigma$  ad 1247).<sup>40</sup> The command to recite “the most beautiful speech from the play” implies a crowd favorite staged many times rather than a recent production seen once.

The scene in the *Frogs* in which Dionysos weighs Aeschylus' and Euripides' trimeter lines on scales, which appear as a prop (1378–1410; cf. 797), visually alludes to Aeschylus' *Psychostasia*.<sup>41</sup> In the play, Zeus weighs Achilles' and Memnon's angels of death (*kēres*) to determine which of the two will die in their impending duel. Aristophanes calls attention to his appropriation of Aeschylus' scales motif. The slave who briefs Xanthias on the “civil war” (759–60) in Hades arising from Euripides' challenge to Aeschylus announces the weighing of the tragedians' *mousikē* in advance of the scene's realization on stage (797). The chorus heralds the scene with astonishment: “The clever are industrious! Who else could have had the inspiration for this different and novel monstrosity replete with absurdity?” (1370–2). Identifying with Aeschylus, Aristophanes heralds his own ingenuity in comically restaging the tragedian's vision. Aeschylus himself commands the performance to demonstrate conclusively the gravity of his poetic expression (1366–7). Euripides is thereby “hoist by his own petard,” since the scales, straight edges, rulers, brick frames, and other instruments are part of his mission “to test the tragedies word by word” (795–802), to Aeschylus' chagrin (803–9). Aeschylus rejects the capacity of critics “to know the natures of poets” (806–10).

40 See Dunbar 1995, 627–8. MacDowell 1971, 210–1 finds a slight probability in favor of Aeschylus' *Niobe* since the silence of the title character is a topic in the *Frogs* (911–22). J. van Leeuwen changed his mind between the first (1893, 68–9) and second editions (1909, 98) of his commentary. In 1893, he averred that it was Sophocles' *Niobe*—Aristophanes (supposedly) parodied this play in his *Dramata* or *Niobos*. In 1909, he asserted it was Aeschylus' *Niobe*: “for the old man the more recent poets are contemptible compared to Aeschylus.”

41 Becker 1915, 34–5; *TrGF* 3. p.376; Hunter 2009, 4–5.

Aeschylus' dramaturgy and cunning of the marketplace (see above) unite in the scene that seals Euripides' doom. Dionysos weighs the poets' verses as Aeschylus' Zeus weighed the souls of Achilles and Memnon. In this case, however, the heavier *mousikē* wins. The recently deceased tragedian will remain in Hades, while the elder he strove in life and death to surpass, will see the light of day. Far from a "*reductio ad absurdum* of the whole notion of making objective assessment of poetic value" the weighing scene makes a ridiculous spectacle of a commonplace: Aeschylus is a weightier poet than Euripides.<sup>42</sup>

There is some reason to believe that Aristophanes and his audience may have seen reperformances of the *Persians*, *Niobe*, *Myrmidonians*, *Phrygians*, and *Psychostasia*. And while the evidence does not amount to proof, it is undeniable that Aristophanes depicts Aeschylus' drama as a living presence in late fifth-century Athens. His comedies offer the impression that the success and popular favor of Aeschylus' tragedy endured in the present because his plays were reperformed.

### Aeschylean Poetry: An Instrument of Comic Ridicule

Comic quotations of and allusions to Aeschylus' poetry provide more secure grounds for inference of familiarity with his plays.<sup>43</sup> Aristophanes' references to Aeschylus sometimes have a proverbial ring.<sup>44</sup> When Euelpides and Peisetairos realize how absurd they look in bird costumes, they compare their situation to Aeschylus' "fame of Libyan proverbs" (*Myrmidonians* fr. 139), a line Achilles quotes to take responsibility for Patroklos' death: an eagle struck by an arrow noticed the arrow's eagle feathers and proclaimed, "we are caught not by others but by our own wings."<sup>45</sup> The quotation gives laughably inflated expression to ordinary shame.

Paratragic allusion to Aeschylus frequently lends an authoritative voice and perspective that enhances comic ridicule even as it parodies the old authority.

42 Halliwell 2011, 140. Aeschylus' weight/dignity/bombast (ὄγκος, βάρος) is a cardinal principle of ancient criticism: *Vita* 4–5 (= *TrGF* 3.A1.13–20), with references to numerous statements of this throughout antiquity.

43 See Rau 1967, 213–4 for a list; Becker 1915 remains useful.

44 See *Ran.* 1392 = *Niobe* fr. 161. *Av.* 313 and *Cho.* 826 with Suda ο 858; *Eccl.* 392 and *Myrmidonians* fr. 138 may be proverbial.

45 Aristophanes uses the phrase "in the manner of/according to Aeschylus" (κατὰ τὸν Αἰσχύλον) here and again at *Thesm.* 134–5; cf. *Av.* 909 for "in the manner of Homer" (κατὰ τὸν Ὅμηρον).

Aeschylean language ridicules named, contemporary individuals who represent incompetence or deviance in ethics, religion, society, culture, or politics. Euripides' in-law scoffs at the effeminate tragedian Agathon by asking the questions Aeschylus' Lykourgos posed about Dionysos in the *Edonians*: "What land does the queer hail from, what is his fatherland, what clothing is this?" (ποδαπὸς ὁ γύννις; ... *Thesm.* 136=A. fr. 61). The line parodies Aeschylus' pleonastic style and uneven juxtaposition of registers—the high-sounding poetic word ποδαπὸς ("from what land?") and the derogatory γύννις ("man-woman"); but its main thrust is to mock the tragedian Agathon for looking and playing the part of the female.

Aristophanes invokes Aeschylus in the *Acharnians* to mock Euripides as the son of a mother who sells wild greens.<sup>46</sup> Dikaiopolis asks effusively for one last favor from Euripides: "give me wild chervil you got from your mother" (σκάνδικά μοι δὸς μητρόθεν δεδεγμένος, 478). The line alludes to the Nurse's speech in Aeschylus' *Libations Bearers*: she calls Orestes "the labor of my life, whom I raised after I got him from his mother" (μητρόθεν δεδεγμένη, *Cho.* 750). So too, presumably, wild chervil is the labor of Euripides' life—the source of his mother's livelihood and a metonym for his inadequate education, aesthetics, and ethics. The comic character Aeschylus uses this canard to break his Achillean silence in the *Frogs*, parodying a Euripidean address to Achilles to deliver the slander: "Oh really, you child of the goddess of cultivated fields? ..." (840, parodying Eur. fr. 885, "Is it so, oh child of a marine goddess?"). The *Thesmophoriazousai* stresses the link between Euripides' mother's alleged profession, his upbringing, and his tragedy: the garland-seller Kritylla accuses Euripides of "doing savage (ἄγρια) harm" to women because he was reared "on wild greens" (ἐν ἀγρίοις τοῖς λαχάνοις, 455–6; cf. 387).

The chorus of the *Birds* echoes a passage of Aeschylus' *Psychagogoi* (fr. 273a) to lampoon Socrates as an unwashed conjurer of souls, the politician Peisander as a coward in search of the soul that abandoned him, and Socrates' follower Chairephon as a bat (1553–64). In the Aeschylean passage, a chorus instructs Odysseus, who needs to consult Teiresias to learn the route home, on where and how to perform blood sacrifice, invoke Earth and Hermes Psychopomp, and beseech Zeus to send up "a swarm of night-wanderers" (fr. 273a). Aeschylus and Aristophanes differ from Homer in placing Odysseus'

46 Euripides' putative low birth was contested in antiquity. Philochoros claimed that Euripides' mother "happened to be from very noble stock" (*FGrHist* 328 F 218). Theopompos continued the comic slander (*FGrHist* 115 F 397). It is a basic element of his portrayal in comedy.

necromantic rite and consultation at Lake Avernus.<sup>47</sup> Aristophanes replaces Aeschylus' epithet for the lake—water that “washes no hands” (ἄχερένιπτον)—with a comic equivalent “unwashed” (ἄλουτος) to ridicule Socrates as averse to bathing (cf. *Ar. Av.* 1282).

Aeschylus' “tawny horsecock” (ξουθός ἱππαλεκτρύων, *Myrmidonians* fr. 134), which, as a scholiast remarks, “they are always mocking” (*Σ Pax* 1177a,) is another weapon in Aristophanes' arsenal.<sup>48</sup> The phrase may parody Aeschylean bombast, but its primary function is to ridicule *alazōnes*, especially menacing but cowardly soldiers, “lions when they are home, foxes in battle” (*Pax* 1189–90). The phrase characterizes an unnamed taxiarch who looks the part of commander but flees battle “like a tawny horse-cock” (*Pax* 1176–7). Dieitrephes was elected phylarch, hipparch, and “now he is a tawny horsecock”—a general—and a *miles gloriosus* (*Av.* 797–800).<sup>49</sup> Euripides in the *Frogs* makes Aeschylus' “tawny horsecock” epitomize the dead weight of his poetry and its failure to secure reference to the world of the audience (932, 937). But comedy applies it effectively to *milites gloriosi*.

Aristophanes' contemporaries also use Aeschylean poetry to mock their targets. Eupolis alters an Ionic *a minore* verse from the parodos of the *Persians*—“the city-sacking, royal army has already crossed to the neighboring shore” (65–7) to denigrate the politician and laughingstock of comedy, Hyperbolos: “the city-sacking Marikas has already crossed” (*Eup. Marikas* fr. 207).<sup>50</sup> In *Marikas*, Eupolis derides Hyperbolos as “Marikas” just as Aristophanes ridicules Kleon as “Paphlagon” in the *Knights*.<sup>51</sup> The line mocks Hyperbolos as a low-class Xerxes whose ignobility, ignorance, and incompetence belie his grandiose designs for imperialist conquest (cf. *Ar. Eq.* 1300–15). The comedian Plato quotes verbatim an iambic refrain from the exodos of the *Persians*, “shout

47 Rusten 1982 makes the case for Lake Avernus instead of Arcadian Lake Stympthalos, as Trinklinios claimed (*ΣCtI Ran.* 1266).

48 I translate ξουθός as “tawny” for convenience; the actual meaning is hard to determine. See e.g. Silk 1983, esp. 317–9. For the creature in art, see von Bothmer 1952. A phrase from the scout's description of Tydeus “shaking three overshadowing crests” (τρεῖς κατασπίλους λόφους/ σείει, *A. Se.* 384–5) has a similar function. Aristophanes uses variations of the phrase to mock Lamachos (*Ach.* 965) and a cowardly taxiarch (*Pax* 1177).

49 Fornara 1971, 65 places Dieitrephes among the generals of 414/3.

50 For the *Marikas* and its relation to the *Persians*, see Sommerstein 2000, 440–2; Storey 2003, 197–214, 329, 350–1; for the (rare) use of Ionic *a minore* meter in comedy, see Parker 1997, 61–4. For Hyperbolos as the laughingstock of comedy, see *Ar. Nub.* 549–62; Rosenbloom 2004a and 2004b; Storey 2003, 200–2 lists references to Hyperbolos in comedy.

51 “Marikas” is a Persian word meaning “young man,” but its Akkadian uses indicate that it can mean “menial” and refer to persons of low social origins; in its Greek adaptation, it apparently means “catamite.” See Hesych. μ 283; Cassio 1985.

now in echoing response to me" (βόα νυν ἀντιδουπά μοι, fr. 226 = *Pers.* 1040=1048 = 1066). The play from which the quote derives is unknown, but his *Hyperbolos* is a good candidate.<sup>52</sup> Capping Eupolis' Xerxes/Hyperbolos joke, Plato may have given this line to Hyperbolos: the comic villain and the tragic hero both lead laments for their catastrophic delusions.

Comedians often quote direct addresses, questions, and second-person commands from Aeschylus' plays. These foreground the poet's formal and antiquated modes of interpersonal communication.<sup>53</sup> In his critique of Aeschylean lyric, Euripides gives an interrogative phrasing to all the songs he quotes, modeling them on *Myrmidonians* fr. 132: "Achilles of Phthia, why ever do you not draw near to help now that you hear/—alas!—the manslaughterous moil of battle?" (*Ran.* 1264–5).<sup>54</sup> Ridiculing Aeschylus' penchant for refrain and iambo-dactylic rhythm, Euripides turns the question, "alas!—for the moil; do you not draw near to help?" into a refrain (1271, 1275, 1277), the repetition of which breaks Dionysos' "kidneys" (i.e. his "balls").<sup>55</sup>

Aeschylus' poetry is a staple in the parody of the high tragic style; but comedians use Aeschylus' voice in the ridicule of common targets—demagogues, military leaders, Socrates, and Euripides. The same cannot be said about Euripides' poetry. Aristophanes uses it to ridicule Euripides. This is especially true at the critical juncture of the *Frogs*. Dionysos justifies his betrayal of Euripides by using half of the *Hippolytos*' infamous line (Eur. *Hipp.* 612) "my tongue has sworn an oath, [but my mind is not bound by an oath]" (Ar. *Ran.* 1471; *Ran.* 101–2; *Thesm.* 275–6). Dionysos ignores Euripides' pleas not to abandon him in Hades by quoting another of his controversial lines: "who knows whether life is death" (*Ran.* 1475–6; cf. Eur. *Phrixos* fr. 833.1; *Polyidos* fr. 638). Dionysos rationalizes his double-cross by calquing a line from the *Aiolos*: "What is shameful if it does not seem so to those watching?" (*Ran.* 1475; cf. "What is

52 For the play, see Pirrotta 2009, 319–37.

53 Commands: *Ran.* 1126–8 (Aesch. *Cho.* 1–3); 1172–3 (Aesch. *Cho.* 4–5); *Ran.* 1269–70 (Aesch. *Telephos* fr. 238; scholars in antiquity debated whether this line was from *Telephos* or *Iphigeneia*), *Ran.* 1273–4 (*Hiereiai* fr. 86; see Dover 1993, 346–7); Plato Com. fr. 226 (quoted above); Ar. *Ach.* 478 (quoted above) turns its original (Aesch. *Cho.* 750) into a command. Direct address: Ar. *Ach.* 883 (Aesch. *Hoplion Krisis* fr. 174); *Ran.* 1383 (Aesch. *Philoktetes* fr. 249); Plato Com. *Presbeis* fr. 130 (Ar. *Thesm.* 39). Questions: Ar. 276 (Aesch. *Edonians* fr. 60); *Thesm.* 134 (Aesch. *Edonians* fr. 61, quoted above); *Ran.* 1264–5 (Aesch. *Myrmidonians* fr. 132, quoted below).

54 Cf. Ar. Ar. 276 and Aesch. *Edonians* fr. 60 with Dunbar 1995, 232–3.

55 See Henderson 1991, 125; cf. Dover 1993, 347. Euripides uses the nonsense lekythion *phlathothrat* to *phlathothrat*, which he appends as codas to strings of dactyls (*Ran.* 1286–95) to mock the wearying repetition and impenetrability of Aeschylean refrains.

shameful if it does not seem so to those enjoying it?" Eur. *Aiolos* fr. 19). The joke is on Euripides and in Euripides' words. The poet who destabilizes such terms as "shame" and "death" and "oath" has no claim to rebuke Dionysos for looking him in the eye "after doing the most shameful deed" (*Ran.* 1474). Indeed, the *Frogs* itself can be described as a *para prosdokian* ("contrary to expectation") joke inflicted on the recently deceased tragedian, Euripides.<sup>56</sup>

### Aeschylus and Euripides as Political Symbols in the *Frogs*

A cornerstone of recent readings of the *Frogs* is the claim, as Stephen Halliwell puts it, that "the outcome of the contest will rest on a politically far from robust foundation."<sup>57</sup> The *Frogs*, however, instantiates a principle Aristotle posits in the *Poetics*: the proper pleasure of comedy consists in "ending in opposite ways for better and worse characters" (τελευτῶσα ἐξ ἐναντίας τοῖς βελτίοσι καὶ χείροσιν, *Po.* 1453a32–3). Aeschylus represents "the better sort," and his return to the world of light and life to save the city confirms it. Throughout the play, he voices the aesthetic, social, moral, religious, and political values of "the better sort." In this regard, he harmonizes with the chorus of the play. Euripides, by contrast, is associated with "the worse sort," and that he remains in Hades never to possess the throne of tragedy clinches the association. Readers of the *Frogs* sometimes see Aeschylus' victory as an outcome the play fails to endorse;<sup>58</sup> this is to undervalue Aeschylus as an old comic talisman and the text of the play.

56 Wright 2012, 90–102 argues that the "*Frogs* is nothing but a series of old jokes" (96). However, the double-cross of a dead Euripides was bound to be novel.

57 Halliwell 2011, 107.

58 Heiden 1991, 96, sees Aeschylus' victory as "a victory of demagogic oratory." His most salient criterion, loudness, can qualify demagogues; but it can also be an attribute of Thucydides son of Melesias, who claimed he could shout out 3,000 archers (*Ar. Ach.* 711–2). The sweeping force of Aeschylus' voice and language is related to his poetic style (*genus grande*). Kreon is a demagogue who abused this style; but it is not a feature of demagoguery *per se*. There is no evidence that demagogues ridiculed in the *Frogs*—Archedemos (416–21) and Kleophon (673–85, 1531–3)—abused the style and 718–37 omits it. Traits essential to the demagogue—low social origins, rhetorical deformation, corruption of the citizen body, boasts of a democratic ethos—are associated with Euripides in the *Frogs*. Rosen 2004 uses Aristophanes' alleged inversion of the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* to explain the ending of the play. More recently scholars have seen Aeschylus' victory as a demonstration of the failure of criticism (Halliwell 2011) or of the futility of seeking political wisdom in tragedy (Alonge 2014). Konstan 1995 offers a sensible reading of the play.



The *Frogs* leads to Aeschylus' victory via a comic twist; Aeschylus' return is a surprising element of the plot rather than an unjustified conclusion to it. The play starts with Dionysos' longing (πόθος) for Euripides and his intention to return him to the world of the living (45–70). An undertone of perverse sexual desire and practice taints this longing, which strikes Dionysos while he “was serving as a marine under Kleisthenes” (48–57). Kleisthenes is comedy's stock figure for a male who plays feminine socio-sexual roles (cf. *Ran.* 421–4).<sup>59</sup> That this longing smites Dionysos while he reads Euripides' *Andromeda*, not while he sees the play in performance hints at Euripides' shortcomings as a dramatist (cf. 866–9 and further below).<sup>60</sup> Dressed as a female and as hyper-masculine Herakles, Dionysos imitates a Euripidean woman in the throes of desire—a *differentia* between Euripides and Aeschylus (*Ran.* 1043–56, 1079–82).<sup>61</sup> When Herakles mocks him for consorting with Kleisthenes, Dionysos complains “Don't make fun of me brother—for I'm really in a bad way, such a desire is tormenting me” (...τοιοῦτος ἔμερός με διαλυμαίνεται, 59).<sup>62</sup> This verb for torment or disfigure (διαλυμαίνω) is rare in poetry (Euripides alone uses it in tragedy). In the *Frogs*, the verb also designates Euripides' corruption of tragedy: outfitting kings in rags, he diminished the genre in order to elicit pity from his audience, cueing the rich to use the ruse in order to avoid civic responsibilities (1058–66). Dionysos' agonizing desire is a mark of Euripides' unwholesome influence; it is not far from madness. The god is “mad about” (μᾶλλὰ πλεῖν ἢ μαίνομαι, 103) Euripides, just as the gods' slaves are “mad about” eavesdropping on their masters' conversations (751) and Hades' criminal element is “crazy mad” about Euripidean rhetoric and thinks “him most clever” (ὑπερεμάνησαν κἀνόμισαν σοφώτατον, 776). The play presents Dionysos' longing for Euripides as daft and degraded.

Dionysos' passion for Euripides is unique among characters in the play. Responding to Dionysos' recitation of phrases from the “seminal poet,” Herakles finds the verse “deceptive nonsense” (κόβλαα, 104) and “totally vile”

59 See Dover 1993, 195–6 with further bibliography. Aristophanes mocked him from 425 through 405 BCE. Kratinos (*Pytine* fr. 208) and Pherekrates (*Petale* fr. 143) also ridicule him. See Sommerstein 1996b, 353.

60 For differing views on the relevance of the *Andromeda*, see Moorton 1980; Gibert 1999/2000; Sfyroeras 2008.

61 A focal point of Aristophanes' parody of Euripides (e.g. *Th.* 389–406, 414–7, 544–8).

62 Dionysos describes his longing also as “devouring” (δαρδάπτει, 66) him; cf. *Nub.* 711, with Dover 1968 *ad loc.*

(παμπόνηρα, 106).<sup>63</sup> Scholars may deny Herakles' affinity for tragedy, but Aristophanes depicts him as knowledgeable about theater.<sup>64</sup> His criticism of Euripides and preference for Sophocles anticipate the outcome of the play, which puts Sophocles on the throne of tragedy pending Aeschylus' return (1515–23). Herakles suggests Iophon fits the description of a “clever poet” (73) and avers that Iophon's father Sophocles is more worthy of being retrieved from Hades than Euripides (73–7).

Dionysos' rejection of Sophocles exhibits his lack of a reason for his preference. His claim that he wants to test Iophon's mettle as a poet in the absence of his father Sophocles is a jibe at that poet. His other reason—that “because Euripides is a rogue (πανούργος, literally, “someone who would do anything”), he would try to run away with me here to the world of the living” (81–2) aligns Euripides with “the worse sort.”<sup>65</sup> After his victory, Aeschylus repeats the claim that Euripides is a rogue (πανούργος) as well as a liar and a defiled trickster (βωμολόχος) who will never sit on the throne of tragedy (1520).<sup>66</sup> The masses in Hades who go crazy for Euripides are rogues and villains (πανούργοι, 774–81)—cloak thieves, cut purses, parricides.<sup>67</sup> Aeschylus accuses Euripides of transforming the Athenians into rogues and villains (πανούργοι, 1015). The alignment of Euripides and “the worse sort” is evident at the outset of the play, reiterated in the *agōn*, and confirmed at its conclusion. The gods' slaves reinforce the characterization. Dionysos' slave Xanthias and Plouton's slave both find Euripides' attempt to unseat Aeschylus preposterous. To them, Euripides is self-evidently

63 For the semantics of *kobala*, tricks employed to divert attention to enable theft, see Rosenbloom 2002, 330–1. For Euripides and *to ponēron* (“the bad, base, vile, inauthentic”) see below.

64 Habash 2002, 10 is preferable to Halliwell 2011, 103–4, who infers that Herakles is “cold ... toward tragedy *tout court*” (103) from his doubt about the need to bring back a dead tragedian other than Sophocles. This doubt stems from his belief that living candidates are preferable to Euripides rather than from a dislike of tragedy (73–87).

65 “Rogue” or “villain” (πανούργος) is the *vox propria* for the demagogue Kleon: *Eq.* 45, 56, 247–50 (4×), 317, 450, 803, 823; *Pax* 651–6 cf. *Eq.* 331, 683–7, 902, 950.

66 Pace Kidd 2012, who contends that *bōmolochos*, merely means “fool,” “buffoon,” “trifler,” “idiot” and has no connotation of transgression associated with its roots “altar” (*bōmos*) and “ambush” (*lochos*).

67 Rosen 2004, 312 equates attribution of villainy and criminality to the mob in Hades with mockery addressed to audience (e.g. *Nub.* 1094–1100; *Eccl.* 438–40), but the absence of *de-ixis* entails a difference between the two groups. Nor are these “petty criminals” as Rosen styles them. Euripides' constituency seems to be the unjust souls who occupy the muck in Hades and are the antithesis of the *mystai* who sing at the doors of Plouton's house (145–64).

less skilled in the tragic art than Aeschylus. Xanthias is surprised to learn that Euripides was not stoned for presuming to replace Aeschylus on the chair of tragedy (778). Plouton's slave reports that Euripides arrived in Hades and immediately displayed his rhetorical prowess—"antilogies and supple bendings and twistings [of the truth]" (τῶν ἀντιλογιῶν καὶ λυγισμῶν καὶ στροφῶν, 775), dazzling the crowd, a *demos* "of villains" (781). The *Frogs* brands Euripides, the theater audience he allegedly corrupted (1015), and his fans in Hades as "villains" or "criminals" (πανοῦργοι).

The *panourgoi* in Hades are not so much fans of Euripides' tragic artistry as they are crazy about his sophistic rhetoric. In the *Peace*, the goddess of festivity, Theoria, takes no delight in Euripides because he is a "poet of forensic rhetoric" (*Pax* 533–4). The first version of the *Clouds* alleged that Socrates wrote Euripides' "very chatty and clever tragedies" (*Ar. Clouds A* fr. 392).<sup>68</sup> Dikaiopolis' raid upon Euripides ragged costumes and props—the substance of his art—threatens to reduce his tragedy to nothing (*Ach.* 464, 470). In the *Frogs*, Euripides speaks as a doctor and sophist when he boasts improvements to Aeschylean tragedy (939–43, quoted above, p. 59) and as a sophist when declaring his benefits to citizens (954–60). The *Frogs* ends by condemning Euripides for consorting with Socrates, "casting out *mousikē* and omitting the greatest parts of the tragic art" (1491–5). The basis for Euripides' popularity in Hades is not a form of *mousikē*; it is his rhetoric. To underscore the perversity of Euripides' attempt to dislodge Aeschylus from the throne of tragedy, Plouton's slave reports that Sophocles deferred to Aeschylus when he arrived at Hades. Sophocles kissed him and took his hand (just as Xanthias and Plouton's slave kiss and shake hands before conversing, 754–6). Euripides' possession of the throne would be so great a travesty that Sophocles vows to contest Euripides for its possession, if he defeats Aeschylus (786–94).

In the *agōn*, Euripides and Aeschylus are proxies for what comedians (as well as tragedians, litigants, historians, and philosophers) depict as an antithesis between *ponēroi* ("bad," "base," "useless," inauthentic"), the aesthetically, socially, and morally deviant, and *chrēstoi* the "good," "noble," "useful," "authentic."<sup>69</sup> Aeschylus represents *chrēstoi*. He has few allies in Hades, just as he would have at Athens, for "the good element (τὸ χρηστόν) is few and far

68 Cf. Telekleid. fr. 42; Wildberg 2006.

69 For the semantics of these terms and their roles in the depiction of socio-political conflict in the fifth and fourth centuries, see Rosenbloom 2004a, 2004b, 2009, 2012, and works cited there. That Aeschylus calls Dionysos *pamponēros* "completely bad" (*Ar. Ran.* 921) for tricking him with the very silences he declared he enjoyed no less than contemporary chatterboxes (916–7) fails to counterbalance the weight of criticism heaped upon Euripides.

between [there], just as it is here" (783). Aeschylus contends that poets should espouse what is fine and noble (τὰ χρηστά) and "conceal what is base and ignoble (τὸ πονηρόν) and not stage it or teach it" as he alleges Euripides did (1053–4). Aeschylus sums up the duty of the poet: "It is necessary for us to say what is fine, noble, and useful" (χρηστά, 1056). The chorus also articulates Aeschylus' precept, proclaiming in the parabasis: "it is right for the sacred chorus to advise and teach what is fine, noble, and useful for the city" (χρηστὰ τῇ πόλει, 686–7).

Aristophanes has Aeschylus locate himself in the line of poets who advocated *ta chrēsta* as beneficial to humanity, listing the noble (γενναῖοι) poets who advanced civilization (1030–1): Orpheus, Musaios, Hesiod, and "divine Homer," who won honor and glory by "teaching what is good, noble, and useful (χρηστά)"—"military formations, virtues, arms and arming" (1029–36). Aeschylus positions himself as heir to Homer: he inspired military zeal and glorified civic heroism (1019–42). Euripides, by contrast, focused on the unwholesome desires of women such as Phaidra and Stheneboia (1043–56): he is the poet of "what is vile" (τὸ πονηρόν).<sup>70</sup> He corrupted the Athenians, making them "very bad when they used to be good and noble" (ἀλλ' ἐκ χρηστῶν καὶ γενναίων μοχθηροτάτους ἀπέδειξας, 1011). Euripides transformed Aeschylus' warrior-citizens into "citizens who shirk their civic duties, vulgar men of the marketplace, cheap tricksters, and rogues" (μηδ' ἀγοραίους μηδὲ κοβάλους, ὥσπερ νῦν, μηδὲ πανούργους, 1014–5). The corrupting force of Euripidean poetry affects all strata of society—hoplites; liturgists, who imitate Euripides' kings in rags, adopting the costume and rhetoric of pity to avoid the trierarchy (1063–6); youths, who sit discoursing idly, rather than exercising in wrestling schools (1069–71); rowers of the *Paralos*, a state galley which only free men could row, whom Euripides induced to talk back to their commanders (1071–7); "noble wives of noble men" who "drink hemlock out of shame because of [Euripides'] Bellerophons" (1050–1). The link between Euripidean tragedy and *ponēria* continues after the *Frogs*. Aristotle twice criticizes Menelaos in Euripides' *Orestes* as "a paradigm of unnecessary *ponēria* of character" (*Po.* 1452a28–9, 1461b21–3).

70 Rosen 2008, 145 finds Dover 1993, *ad* 1044 "tendentious," "or at least a limited, reading" for claiming that Aeschylus does not depict Clytemnestra as a woman in the throes of sexual desire. I agree with Dover; but the point is that comedy is biased against Euripides. This does not justify false equivalences to counteract the bias. For instance, Xerxes is not comparable to Telephos and Euripides' ragged kings. Persians tore their clothes in sorrow and shame after Salamis (Hdt. 8.99.2). Aeschylus embeds the image of torn robes so deeply into the verbal and visual imagery of the *Persians* that not even a comedian would dismiss it as a mere ploy to elicit pity. See Rosenbloom 2006, 54–6, 74, 88, 113–5, 130–8.

The sheer scope of Euripides' shortcomings enables Aeschylus to cast Euripides as responsible for all of Athens' troubles (*Ran.* 1078–88):

For what evils is he not to blame?/ Did he not invent putting procurers onstage/ and women having sex with their brothers/ and saying that living is not living/ and what's more, because of this, our city/ is teeming with undersecretaries and defiled trickster-apes of the people,/ forever deceiving the people;/ and no one can carry a torch anymore because they're out of shape.

The denunciation of Euripides interlocks with the chorus' diatribe on contemporary democratic leadership in the parabasis. The city drives Athens' "fine and noble citizens" (τῶν πολιτῶν τοὺς καλοὺς τε ἀγαθοὺς, 728) out of circulation just as the city's newly minted base coinage drives out its fine silver and gold-plated coinages (718–25)—an outrageous violation (*Ran.* 727–30):

The citizens who we know are well born and morally good,/ who are just, fine and noble men, raised in wresting schools, choruses, and *mousikē*—these we outrage violently.

τῶν πολιτῶν θ' οὓς μὲν ἴσμεν εὐγενεῖς καὶ σώφρονας  
ἀνδρας ὄντας καὶ δικαίους καὶ καλοὺς τε ἀγαθοὺς  
καὶ τραφέντας ἐν παλαιστραῖς καὶ χοροῖς καὶ μουσικῇ,  
πrouσελοῦμεν.<sup>71</sup>

It is not merely that Athens fails to use its "good and useful" citizens; the city scourges them. The *demos* chooses as leaders Thracian slaves (i.e. Kleophon), recent immigrants, scoundrels and sons of scoundrels (πονηροὶς κέκ πονηρῶν, 731), the uneducated, and those devoid of virtue (726–32). The contest over the throne of tragedy in Hades mirrors the struggle between *chrēstoi* and *ponēroi* at Athens. In particular, the dominance of the *ponēroi* at Athens threatens to affect Hades as rogues there seek to use their majority status to put Euripides on the throne of tragic artistry (770–8). The humiliation and scapegoating of *ponēroi* are basic features of several old comic performances.<sup>72</sup> The chorus of

71 The verb *πrouσελέω* is found only here and in [Aesch.] *PV* 438, where Prometheus uses it to describe his treatment at the hands of Zeus.

72 Rosenbloom 2002, 329–39.

the *Frogs* ridicules politically active *ponēroi* throughout the play. Chief among them is Archedemos, who, the chorus alleges, did not enroll in a phratry at age seven, “but now is a demagogue among the corpses above, and is first in the villainy there” (νυνὶ δὲ δημαγωγεῖ/ ἐν τοῖς ἄνω νεκροῖσι, / κάσιν τὰ πρῶτα τῆς ἐκεῖ μοχθηρίας, 420–25; *mochthēria* is a synonym for *ponēria*).<sup>73</sup> The chorus ridicules Kleophon as less intelligent than the masses in the theater, who themselves are called “mindless” in the play (734, 1502–4) and taunts Kleigenes “the small” as “the vilest bath man” (ὁ πονηρότατος βαλανεύς) and the “ape now harassing us” (707–8).<sup>74</sup>

The *polis* in the past—the time of Aeschylus—would not have used these men as ritual scapegoats (φαρμακοί, 733–4).<sup>75</sup> The *Frogs* threatens *ponēroi* with extra-legal violence and death. Kleigenes has a livelihood and character that will cause him lament—he will be the victim of violence (706–17). Kleophon, mocked as a Thracian in the *Frogs* (678–85, 703–31, 1531–3) will sing the nightingale’s shrill lament after he is convicted even through the votes are equal (683–5)—the law prescribes acquittal in such cases. At the end of the play, Hades empowers Aeschylus to be his minister, handing him instruments of death for Kleophon, Myrmex, Nikomachos, and Archenomos (1500–14).<sup>76</sup> Hades claims a slave master’s right over them and Adeimantos: to tattoo runaways and drag them back to his house (1504–14).<sup>77</sup> While the play imagines the death of these *ponēroi* and their return to the house of their master, Hades, it keeps Euripides in house of Hades. The chorus also twice advocates the return of oligarchs disgraced in 411/10 (686–705, 718–35). The play sends Aeschylus to Athens as

73 Cf. *Ran.* 586–8. According to the logic of comic ideology, Archedemos had three strikes against him: “low” birth (he was “poor,” *Xen. Mem.* 2.9.4); he managed the two-obol fund (*Xen. Hell.* 1.7.2), which gave him power over the poor (cf. *Ar. Vesp.* 700–3; *Aeschin.* 2.76); he exacerbated socio-political tensions after Arginousai (*Xen. Hell.* 1.7.2).

74 Kleigenes (*PA* 8488) was probably the secretary of the Boule after the oligarchic coup of 411/10, holding the office in 410/09 (1G I<sup>3</sup> 375) when a law was passed allowing citizens to kill officeholders in any non-democratic Athenian government with impunity (*And.* 1.96).

75 For scapegoat ritual, see e.g. Bremmer 1983; Huber 2005.

76 Myrmex and Archenomos are unknown. Nikomachos (*PA* 10934) may be the alleged son of a public slave who was enrolled as a citizen under the 400 and appointed to transcribe the laws of the *patrios politeia*. See Lysias 30.

77 Adeimantos (*PA* 202) was Alcibiades’ cousin whose property was confiscated and auctioned after he was convicted of profaning the Mysteries (1G I<sup>3</sup> 426). The records of sale indicate that he held slaves who made commodities for the market (a spit-maker and two cobblers). He was elected general from 408/7 through 405/4; see Fornara 1971, 69–71. The reason for the play’s hostility toward him is unclear.

minister of death to *ponēroi*. The fates of Aeschylus and Euripides parallel the desired fates of *chrēstoi* and *ponēroi*.

Insofar as the *Frogs* represents democratic culture as constituted by sophistic rhetoric, the vitiated values of the marketplace, and moral failing across all socio-economic groups, Euripides is a democrat. He boasts that he gave speaking roles to women, slaves, masters, maidens, and old ladies (948–59). Aeschylus thunders that he deserves to die for daring to do this, but Euripides counters: “By Apollo, I made it democratic” (μὰ τὸν Ἀπόλλων· δημοκρατικὸν γὰρ αὖτ’ ἔδρων. 951–2). Dionysos does not allow Euripides to support his claim; Euripides lacks democratic credibility (952–4 with Dover 1993, *ad* 953). Euripides undermines his claim to a democratic ethos when he names Theramenes and Kleitophon as his students (964–7). Both were associated with sophists and were agents in the oligarchic coups of 411 and 404.<sup>78</sup>

Aeschylus’ pupil, Phormisios (Megainetos the Manes is unknown), failed in his bid to restrict citizenship rights to land owners after the civil war of 404–403 (Dion. Hal. *de Lys.* 32; *Lys.* 34). The pro-Theban (cf. *Ar. Ran.* 1023–4) and hirsute Phormisios was the antithesis of a sophist a: “big-bearded spear-trumpet” and “sneering pine-bender” (*Ar. Ran.* 966). Phormisios, Theramenes, and Kleitophon were all involved in anti-democratic attempts to institute “ancestral laws” or “ancestral constitution.” In 411, Kleitophon proposed a rider to a law, mandating selection of a board “to research the ancestral laws which Kleisthenes made when he established democracy—which was not demotic (δημοτική) but similar to Solon’s” ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 29.3). In 404, Kleitophon joined Phormisios, Anytos, and Archinos under Theramenes’ leadership as proponents of the *patrios politeia* ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 34.3; cf. Diod. Sic. 14.3.6). Neither Euripides nor Aeschylus is a democrat in the *Frogs*. They are superior in intellect and talent to the democratic figures—Kleophon, Archedemos, Kleigenes—ridiculed in the play. Euripides’ politics are not markedly different from Aeschylus’ or from Aristophanes’.<sup>79</sup> The differences between Phormisios, on the one side, and Kleitophon and Theramenes, on the other, are stylistic and ethical. Phormisios scorned the Thirty but advocated a landed citizen body as mandated by the *patrios politeia*. Theramenes and Kleitophon were

78 Σ *Ar. Ran.* 541 makes Theramenes a pupil of Prodikos, a claim made by Aeschines the Socratic (*Athen.* 5.62); see also Suda θ 342, κ 1909; *Ar. Ran.* 970 with Dover 1993, 314. Diodoros makes him a pupil of Socrates (14.5.1). Kleitophon was an associate of Thrasymachos of Chalkedon and of Lysias ([Pl.] *Kleit.* 406a1–4; *Pl. Resp.* 328b4–8; Nails 2002, 102–3). Oligarchy: Thuc. 8.68.4, 89–92; *Lys.* 12.65–78; *Xen. Hell.* 2.3.2–4.1; [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 29.3, 34.3; Diod. Sic. 14.3.6–5.3.

79 See Rosenbloom 2012 for the moderately oligarchic tendencies of theatrical politics.

intellectuals; the former was a clever, voluble, double-dealing demagogue of dubious allegiances.

The term *chrēstos* defines the norms of poetry, morality, and political leadership.<sup>80</sup> It qualifies the comic chorus' advice to the city (*Ran.* 686–7), the style, substance, and proper effect of tragic representation (1011, 1035, 1056, 1062), and the moral worth of political leaders (734–5). The latter instance clarifies the overlap between the epithet *chrēstos* and laudatory labels such as “fine and noble” (καλός τε καὶ γαθός), “of noble birth” (εὐγενής), “self-controlled” (σώφρων), “just” (δίκαιος), “educated in the wrestling schools and in musical culture” (718, 727–9). It is therefore not surprising that the final contest of the *Frogs* hinges on “which of the two poets advises something good/useful (χρηστόν) for the city” (1420–1). Dionysos redefines the aim of his journey to Hades: “so that the city, having been saved, may put on plays” (literally, “bring on choruses,” 1419).<sup>81</sup> An opinion about Alcibiades comprises the first part of the answer about “salvation”: the city had invested its hopes for salvation in Alcibiades in 415 (Thuc. 8.53, 76.7, 81.1) and 407 (Xen. *Hell.* 1.4.20). The *Frogs* suggests that a third time might be a charm.

Aeschylus, who differs from Euripides in seeking information before he answers, discovers the city's ambivalence about Alcibiades: “It longs for him, but hates him; and it wants to have him” (1425; cf. *Ion TrGF* 1 F 44). Euripides' answer echoes the opinion of the demagogues who drove Alcibiades from Athens: Alcibiades is selfish and harmful to the city (1427–9).<sup>82</sup> Aristophanes'

80 Goldhill 1991, 204, claims that the use of “noble” (γεννάδας) and “good” (χρηστός) to qualify Xanthias (179, 640) and Xanthias' definition of the “noble man” (γεννάδας) as “only knowing how to drink and fuck” (739–40) warrant the conclusion that, “The controlled seriousness of the parabasis remains in control only by framing it as an entirely discrete scene.” This is not a compelling conclusion. The meaning of the terms *chrēstos* and *ponēros* is consistent throughout the play. Second, “noble”—γεννάδας, γενναίος, χρηστός—qualifies both masters and slaves (e.g. *Eur. Med.* 54; *Meleager* fr. 529); the concept involves the proper realization of a nature and function. Calling a slave these terms does not throw them into question. Third, knowing how to drink and fuck is basic to the culture of the drinking groups in which the elite thrived; see, e.g. Davidson 1997, 52. Aripbrates *ponēros*, the man who exceeds the capacity of the label *ponēros* to be meaningful, is excluded from the drinking group for not knowing how to fuck (*Ar. Eq.* 1279–89); Philokleon in the *Wasps* likewise fails in both (1292–49). The parabasis makes explicit that the label *chrēstos* involves justice, nobility of birth, education, *mousikē*, and self-control. Xanthias' definition of the *gennadas* does not debunk those connections.

81 The salvation of Athens, of Hellas, or of both is a regular motif in Aristophanes: *Eq.* 147–9, 457–9; *Pax* 865–7, 913, 1034–6; *Lys.* 30, 41, 498–9, 524–6; *Eccl.* 204–12, 218–20, 395–412.

82 Androkles, Kleonymos, Peisandros, and Charikles were behind the conviction of Alkibiades in 415; see Rosenbloom 2004b, 323–31. According to Xenophon (*Hell.* 1.4.13),



Aeschylus refers to the lion cub parable of the *Agamemnon* (716–37), claiming a city should not nurture a lion and his whelp, but once it happens, citizens should “serve his ways” (1431a–1432).<sup>83</sup> Aeschylus says that Athens ought to follow the lion and his whelp, Perikles and Alcibiades. His advice accords with the chorus’ dictum to “use the *chrēstoi* again” (735).

Unable to judge Aeschylus’ wise and Euripides’ clear answers (1434),<sup>84</sup> Dionysos asks specifically how the city can be saved (1435–6). Usurping Dionysos’ role as the play’s buffoon, Euripides lapses into absurdity. He suggests winging Kleokritos along with Kinesias (cf. *Ar. Av.* 1372–1409) so that the pair might float on the breezes, sprinkling vinegar from jars into the eyes of enemy sailors.<sup>85</sup> The idea to use vinegar jars is Kephisophon’s (1437–41).<sup>86</sup> Given an opening when Aeschylus demands to return to Athens to answer the question (1461–2),<sup>87</sup> Euripides advocates trusting and using the mistrusted and

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the masses in 407 felt that the politicians had unfairly targeted Alcibiades: they were less powerful, proposed worse measures (*μοχθηρότερα*), and led for their own private profit; Alcibiades, they thought, always increased the public treasury, employing his own resources and the city’s power. For the negative tradition in the fourth century and beyond, see *Lys.* 14; [*Lys.*] 15; 16; [*And.*] 4.

- 83 For Pericles as lion, see Herodotos’ report of his mother Agariste’s dream (6.131.2). Aristophanes refers to this tradition in mock prophecies (*Eq.* 1036–40 and *Thesm.* 512–6). See *Plut. Alc.* 2.3.1 for Alcibiades as self-described lion.
- 84 The scholia to *Ran.* 1413 and 1434 thought that Aeschylus was “wise” (*σοφός*) and spoke “wisely” (*σοφῶς*) and that Euripides pleased Dionysos and was clear (*Σ RVMEΘ*(Ald) *Ran.* 1413; *RVE Ran.* 1434). Aristarchos, however, offered the opposite opinion, and nineteenth- and early twentieth-century commentators followed him, e.g. van Leeuwen 1896, *ad* 1413; Rodgers 1902, *ad* 1413. Hurst 1971, however, argues convincingly that “wise” and “wisely” qualify Aeschylus and his speech; see also Woodbury 1986, 245–6; 1988, 181; cf. Sommerstein 1996a, *ad* 1413 and 1434. Dover 1993, 19 thinks it impossible to ascertain which poet is which in 1413 and 1434.
- 85 To name Kinesias (*PA* 8438) as Athens’ salvation is buffoonery. Kinesias was an “airy-fairy” dithyrambic poet traduced in comedy and elsewhere for his awful poetry, chronic disease, emaciated appearance, loose bowels, and impiety. Kleokritos (*PA* 8570) is perhaps the Herald of the Mysteries who was mocked for his big feet (*Σ Av.* 877) or body (Dunbar 1995, 512). Xenophon depicts him as an eloquent defender of the Athenian community; his brief and passionate speech shattered the Thirty’s unity (*Hell.* 2.4.20–3).
- 86 Euripides names Kephisophon as his collaborator in the composition of monodies that rescued tragedy from its bloated Aeschylean state (*Ar. Ran.* 944). The scholia (e.g. *Ar. Ran.* 1408) characterize Kephisophon as a slave who co-composed Euripides lyrics and cuckolded him. See further, *Vit. Eur.* = *TrGF* 5.1 *test.* 1A, 3; III, 3; IV, 1; *Ar. fr.* 596; *Telekleid. fr.* 41.
- 87 There is a consensus that lines 1442–65 could not have been performed as written, but no agreement beyond that. Sommerstein 1993/2009 renews the case for the view that the lines preserve two performances. The city was said to have praised Aristophanes for the

unused: “if we should mistrust the citizens we now trust, and if we should use men we do not use” (1446–8). The sentiment resembles that of the parabasis (718–37). However, there is a glaring difference: it lacks moral discrimination. Not all people who are mistrusted and unused are *chrēstoi*. Euripides ends on a buffoonish, plagiaristic note, admitting Kephisophon’s contribution to his plan for salvation and hollowing out the message of the parabasis.

Aeschylus asks about the character of current leaders and learns that the *demos* hates the *chrēstoi* and uses the *ponēroi* perforce (1454–7). He sees no way the city can be saved if the *demos* relates to *chrēstoi* and *ponēroi* in this way and declares that he will offer his advice upon return to Athens. Dionysos prods Aeschylus to send good things from the underworld, as a chthonic hero would do.<sup>88</sup> Aeschylus urges the Themistoclean-Periclean formula for Athenian salvation.<sup>89</sup> This strategy saved Athens and Hellas at Salamis in 480 and may have worked during the Peloponnesian War, had it been followed *Ar. Ran.* 1463–5:

Whenever they think others’ land is theirs/ and theirs is the enemy’s,  
and whenever they think ships their source of income and their source of  
income (i.e. land) no source of income.

Aristophanes’ Aeschylus reinforces the message of the parabasis, consistently endorsing principles associated with *chrēstoi* such as Themistokles, Perikles, and Alkibiades. Euripides, by contrast, demonstrates the quality Aristophanes foists upon him in a dispute with Kratinos: his vulgar, cheap, and mercenary ideas (νοῦς δ’ ἄγοράλους, *Skenas Katalambanousai* fr. 488). Kratinos lumped together Aristophanes and Euripides as intellectuals, calling a sophisticated spectator (χομπός ... θεατής) “a bit of a hair-splitter, a hunter after clever little sayings, a Euripid-Aristophanizer” (fr. 342).<sup>90</sup> Kratinos unmasked Aristophanes as Euripides’ imitator and acolyte: the comedian, the tragedian, and the spectator share a sophistic bent. According to the scholiast who quotes the fragment (Σ Areth. Pl. *Ap.* 19c), Aristophanes admitted stylistic similarity with Euripides: “I employ his elegant expression, but I make my ideas less cheap and vulgar”

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parabasis of the *Frogs* (*Ran.* 686–705), honored him with an olive crown (*Vit. Ar.* 32–9 = *PCG* 3.2 *Test.* 1), and had the play reperformed (*Ran. Hyp.* 1.39–40, citing *Dikaiarchos*). I accept transposition of 1451–3 to after 1441 and of 1442–1450 to after 1462, but do not posit two performances.

88 See Garvie 2009, *ad* 221–2.

89 See Thuc. 1.143.5; cf. 8.96.1–2; [Xen.] *Ath.* 2.13–6.

90 See O’Sullivan 2006.

(*Skenas Katalambanousai* fr. 488). That Aristarchos athetized Euripides' reply at 1437–41 because it was “too vulgar and cheap” (ὅτι φορτικώτεροί εἰσι καὶ εὐτελεῖς, Σ *Ar. Ran.* 1437) recapitulates the very point of the lines.

### Conclusion: Aeschylus the Wise and Euripides the Scapegoat

In many ways, the *Frogs* reprises the *agōn* of the *Clouds*. Aeschylus plays the Stronger Logos, which the Cloud-chorus addresses as “you who practice the most celebrated, beautifully towered skill and wisdom” (ὦ καλλίπυργον σοφίαν/ κλεινοτάτην ἐπασκῶν, 1024–5; cf. *Ar. Ran.* 1004, quoted above, for the metaphor of the fortification tower).<sup>91</sup> The Stronger Logos personifies *sophia* as time-honored wisdom and ethical moderation.<sup>92</sup> Such *sophia* entails *sōphrosynē*—knowledge of self, of one's place in the *polis*, and of limits the *polis* places on desire and action.<sup>93</sup> Euripides' declaration in the *Frogs* that poets win respect and admiration “from intelligence and advice, and because we make people better in their cities” (1008–9) makes explicit the implication of poetic wisdom and ethical moderation.

The contest between Aeschylus and Euripides, like the quarrel between Strepsiades and Pheidippides in the *Clouds*, presents an antithesis between *mousikē*, cultural tradition, non-negotiable moral principle on the one side (that of Aeschylus), and rejection of *mousikē*, perverse intellectuality, which consists in the judgment that Euripides is “most skilled” (σοφώτατος) and in justifications for transgressions such as brother-sister incest, father-, and mother-beating (*Nub.* 1399–1451). Ignorance, rejection, or corruption of *mousikē* in its narrow sense—playing the lyre in customary modes and singing traditional lyrics (*Nub.* 964–72)—and in its wider senses of dance, music, poetry, literacy, and cultural knowledge—are comic signs of decline that define the Weaker Logos, demagogues, Socrates, sophists, Euripides, and the new music.<sup>94</sup>

91 For the association of the Stronger Logos with *sōphrosynē* see further *Nub.* 961–2, 1026–7, 1060–73. Aristophanes is fond of pairing the antithetical *sōphrōn* and *katapugōn* in his early plays (e.g. *Daitaleis*, *agōn* of the *Clouds*).

92 The Stronger Logos struggles to control his desire for the youths he describes (esp. 973–80), yet Dover 1968, *ad* 977 misses the difference between the two Logoi: the Stronger Logos masters his desire; the Weaker Logos satisfies every desire and then concocts justifications to evade punishment. For *sōphrosynē* as the suppression of powerful desire, see *Ant.Soph.* frs. B 58–59 D-K; North 1966, 89–91.

93 Cf. Hubbard 1991, esp. 95.

94 Demagogic leadership is incompatible with *mousikē*: *Ar. Eq.* 191–2; cf. 188–9, 985–7; *Ran.* 727–35 (quoted above). Cf. *Eup. Marikas* fr. 208; *Aiges* fr. 4 with Storey 2003, 67–74.

The *agōn* between the two tragedians is about *sophia*. The adjective *sophos* can designate those skilled in the narrow and broad senses of *mousikē*. Homer is the quintessential “wise poet” (*Pax* 1096–8; cf. *Ran.* 1034).<sup>95</sup> The contest between Aeschylus and Euripides aims at determining which poet is “most skilled in the art” (τὴν τέχνην σοφώτατος, *Ran.* 780; cf. 766, 1519). The task of the poet is “to say something wise” (1108; cf. 882–4, 896; *Pax* 1096). Euripides may sarcastically call Aeschylus “wise Aeschylus” (*Ran.* 1154); but the *Frogs* assumes and then affirms that Aeschylus is more highly skilled than Euripides and that Sophocles is second in skill (1519). Dionysos agrees that the epithet *sophos* belongs to Aeschylus (1413, 1434; 1451 is an ironic putdown).

At the outset of the play, Dionysos professes to need an “intelligent” (δεξιός, *Ran.* 71) and “seminal poet” (95). The term “intelligent” (δεξιός) applies positively to “the great and intelligent arts” (762), such as tragedy, the best practitioners of which receive meals in the Prytaneion and sit beside Plouton (761–5). “Intelligence” (δεξιότης) is a trait that justifies respect for poets (1007–9). The chorus of the *Frogs* assures the competing poets that the audience “understands clever matters” (τὰ δεξιά) and each has a book (1114).<sup>96</sup> The chorus locates Aristophanes among the *dexioi* when it heralds the weighing scene (1370–3; see above pp. 63–4). At the same time, Euripides’ pupil Theramenes is a “clever” (δέξιος) man who knows how to find a comfortable spot on a ship in a storm (540; cf. 967–70). The words in the semantic field of “intelligent” (σοφός, δεξιός) cover a wide range: wisdom and foresight, technical and artistic skill, intelligence, inventiveness, ingenuity, cunning, intellectuality, and sophistry. The point on this spectrum where skill, intelligence, and ethical moderation intersect defines Aeschylus’ privileged status as the antithesis of sophists, demagogues, and Euripides.<sup>97</sup> In their cases, the meaning of *sophos* and *dexios* shades into “oversubtle” and “sophistic” (χομπός).<sup>98</sup> The Weaker Logos personifies such

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Socrates and Euripides: *Ran.* 1491–99. New Music: Ar. *Nub.* 969–72; *Gerytades* fr. 178; *Ran.* 92–4 (post-Euripidean tragedians); Pherekr. *Cheiron* fr. 155; Csapo 2004a, esp. 229–48.

95 See further Ar. *Pax* 700 (Kratinos), 796–98; Av. 934; *Vesp.* 1277–9. For the *dexios* poet, see Ar. *Ran.* 71 (Euripides); Phryn. Com *Mousai* fr. 42 (Sophocles); Strattis *Anthroporestes* fr. 1 (Euripides).

96 See Woodbury 1976; Dover 1993, 34–5, 330–1. It unlikely that the spectators’ having been on campaign is a metaphor for experience of the world, as Dover suggests. More probably it continues the joke of Dionysos’ reading Euripides while “on campaign” (48–54).

97 Cf. Woodbury 1986, 244–5.

98 See Ar. *Eq.* 17–8: “in ingenious Euripidean terms” (χομπευριπικῶς); *Nub.* 1030–1, the Weaker Logos has a “sophistical-seeming Muse” (χομποπρεπῇ μοῦσαν); *Pax* 993–5. For *sophos/sophia* with this connotation, see Ar. *Ach.* 401 (Euripides’ slave); *Eq.* 1377 (Phaiax); *Nub.* 94, 359–63 (Prodikos), 412–9, 489–91, 510–7, 764, 773, 841, 882–5, 1057, 1202, 1207, 1370, 1378;

thought, speech, and action, “inventing new ideas” (γνώμας καινὰς ἐξευρίσκων, *Nub.* 885–6) in order to rationalize transgressive profit and pleasure while denying the value of culture, law, morality and religion (e.g. *Nub.* 364–411, 825–33, 901–7, 1039–42, 1068–82, 1400–5, 1462–77). Aristotle’s description of Sisyphos as “clever but villainous” (ὁ σοφὸς μὲν μετὰ πονηρίας <δ’> ..., *Po.* 1456a21–3) defines the ethos of such *sophia*. Such is Euripides’ character in the *Frogs*: even as he longs for him, Dionysos sees Euripides as a kind of Sisyphos, “a rogue who would try to run away [from Hades] to here with me” (80–1).

Aristophanes’ treatment of Aeschylus, Euripides, *dexiotēs*, and *sophia* has implications for his own self-representation as a poet, for if any words sum up the way Aristophanes presents himself, his innovative and clever comedy, his target audience, and his judges, they are *sophos* and *dexios*.<sup>99</sup> Like the Weaker Logos, who boasts that his skill (τὸ σοφόν) consists in “inventing new and revolutionary ideas” (*Nu.* 895–6, quoted above), Aristophanes trumpets his originality: “I practice my craft always introducing new forms (αἰεὶ καινὰς ἰδέας), completely different from one another, and all ingenious (καὶ πάσας δεξιὰς, *Nub.* 547–8; cf. *Vesp.* 1044–59, 1535–7; *Eccl.* 576–87).<sup>100</sup>

Aristophanes’ cutting wit serves the restoration of a lost greatness. Aristophanes and his fellow comedians dramatize longing for a wide range of golden age scenarios, and often stage their return.<sup>101</sup> Athens’ golden age is the lifetime of Aeschylus, when the city won victories over the Persians at Marathon (490) and Salamis (480) and built the Athenian empire. Comedians depicted tragedians as Aeschylus’ heirs just as political orators represented present-day Athenians as the heirs of Aeschylus’ generation (Thuc. 2.62.3; cf. 2.36.2; Ar. *Vesp.* 1099–101). The comedians’ Aeschylus is a fictionalized individual and representative of the generation whose members include Phrynichos, Miltiades, Kimon, Aristides, and Themistokles—old comedy subjects them to occasional praise and milder mockery than contemporary Athenians.<sup>102</sup>

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*Ran.* 968 (Theramenes), for *dexios/dexiotēs* in a pejorative sense, see Ar. *Eq.* 719 (Kleon), 1377 (Phaiax); *Nub.* 198, 418, 428, 757, 834, 1399; *Thesm.* 9 (Euripides); *Ran.* 540 (Theramenes).

99 Ar. *Ach.* 628–9; *Eq.* 228, 233; *Nub.* 520–7, 535, 575 (ironic); *Vesp.* 64–6, 1051–9; *Ran.* 676, 700 (ironic), 737, 1109–18, 1118; *Eccl.* 1155; cf. *Eq.* 753, 1141–50.

100 See also Metagenes *Philothytes* fr. 15; Pherekr. *Korianno* fr. 84; Sommerstein 1992/2009, 120–1.

101 See Pl. *Sym.* 190c2–193c7; Baldry 1953; Sutton 1980, 55–67; Ceccarelli 1996; 2000; Ruffell 2000; 2011, esp. 386–93.

102 Kratin. *Archilochoi* fr. 1; Ar. *Eq.* 813–8, 884, 1325; *Lys.* 1143–4; Eup. *Demes* frs. 104, 126, 130, et pass.; Poleis fr. 221. For the *Marathonomachai* as models for the Athenian identity, see Rosenbloom 2002, 325–9. Aristophanes remembers Phrynichos for the sweetness of his songs and his choreography: *Vesp.* 218–21, 268–70, 1490, 1523–4; *Av.* 749–52; *Ran.* 1299–300.

The genre depicts post-Periklean leaders such as Kleon, Hyperbolos, and Kleophon as grossly inferior to their predecessors. The same holds true in comedy for Aeschylus relative to his successors, with the exception of Sophocles.

Literary critics often deny hostile intent to comic mockery of Euripides.<sup>103</sup> But ridicule of a target's mother is rare in old comedy; it is undeniably hostile. Only four figures in extant old comedy are subjected to ridicule of their mothers, three politicians—Hyperbolos, Kleophon, Philonides<sup>104</sup>—and Euripides; and his mother receives the most extensive ridicule. The *Frogs* alleges Euripides' wife's adultery (1046–8), a license not typically taken, even in licentious old comedy. The derogation of Euripides' mother and wife interlocks with depictions of Euripides' Muse as a castanet-wielding prostitute, his lyrics as derived from the songs of courtesans, and his female characters as whores (*Ran.* 1043–4, 1301–8, 1325–9). Prior to the *Frogs*, the crowning moment of Aristophanes' ridicule of Euripides was his casting him in the role of the procuress Artemisia in the *Thesmophoriazousai*. When the plots of his romantic escape plays, *Helen* and *Andromeda*, fail to liberate his in-law from captivity, Euripides dons the costume of an old bawd and employs the dancing-girl/prostitute Elaphion to divert the attention of the Skythian archer guarding his in-law, thereby liberating him (*Thesm.* 1172–225). Aristophanes' casting is a fitting realization of Euripides' comic identity as the son of a vendor of wild greens, husband of an adulteress, client of a prostitute Muse, and master of diversionary tactics (*kobala*, *Ran.* 101, 1014). The *Frogs* does one better: it tricks Euripides into thinking he will return to light and life as a poet judged superior to Aeschylus, only to kill him again as a scapegoat for Athens' problems and then to dispatch Aeschylus to the world of the living to hasten the death of *ponēroi* who continue to blight the city.

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103 Silk 2000, 52; Rosen 2005, 262; Halliwell 2011, 141; Wright 2012, 162.

104 Hermipp. *Artopolides* frs. 9–10; Ar. *Nub.* 551–7 with Σ 555; Storey 2003, 204–5; *Thesm.* 830–41. Pl.Com. *Kleophon* fr. 61. Philonides' mother mated with a camel to produce him (Theopomp.Com. *Aphrodite* fr. 5; cf. Philyllios fr. 22).

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# Aristotle's Reception of Aeschylus: Reserved Without Malice

*Dana LaCourse Munteanu*

## Aeschylus in Aristotle's *Poetics*

### *References, Significance, and Complications in Poetics 4*

Many commentators on the *Poetics* observe that Aeschylus receives less interest than the other two famous fifth-century tragedians, Sophocles and Euripides.<sup>1</sup> Why is this so? A first and simple explanation for this may be found in an overall diminished interest in Aeschylean drama in the fourth-century.<sup>2</sup> A second reason may be found in Aristotle's own dramatic preferences, as I shall suggest in this chapter.

Let us begin by examining the specific comments on Aeschylus' tragedies, despite their relative scarcity, in the *Poetics*.<sup>3</sup> A first occurrence concerns

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- 1 Hanink 2014, 205, with a review of Green's earlier analysis (1994, 49–88), lists five references (some not of confirmed authorship—my addition) to the plays of Aeschylus, twelve to those of Sophocles, and, twenty to the tragedies of Euripides in the *Poetics*.
  - 2 As, for example, Burian 2010, 10 notes, emphasizing that Plato cites Aeschylus more often and more appreciatively than his well-known contemporaries, while Aristotle gives priority to Sophocles and Euripides in his citations from tragedy in the *Poetics*. Kirby 2012, 422–3 reinforces the standard view that Aristotle ascribes to Aeschylus some “antique grandeur,” recognizes the effectiveness of Euripides as a dramatist but truly and deeply admires Sophocles who best suits his philosophical criteria. Hanink 2014, 131–2 well discusses the historical and cultural context: extant testimonies generally ignore Aeschylus' name in the first half of the fourth century, and interest in the tragedian is rekindled only after Lycurgus' law around 330 BC; for possible connections between Lycurgan law (ordering statues for the fifth-century triad of tragedians and preservation of their plays in public archive) and Aristotle's interest in fifth-century tragedy, see also Hanink 2010, 41–2.
  - 3 For the later reception of Aeschylus in the tradition of the Aristotelian school, see the informative essay of Montanari 2008, providing a brief review of Aristotle's lost treatise (*Peri Tragôidion*, Diog. Laert. 5.26), and a detailed discussion of later Peripatetic comments on Aeschylean drama by Dicaearchus, Chamaeleon, who wrote an entire treatise on Aeschylus, and others.

the tragedian's role in the account of the development of the genre.<sup>4</sup> In *Poetics* 4 (1449a9–12) both tragedy and comedy are said to have originated as types of improvisations and derived from the leaders of the dithyramb (tragedy) and of the phallic songs (comedy).<sup>5</sup> Tragedy “was enhanced” (ἡὺξήθη, 1449a13) and, after undergoing many changes (πολλὰς μεταβολὰς μεταβαλοῦσα, 1449a14), it stopped (ἐπαύσατο), since it had reached its nature (φύσιν, 1449a15). This statement has often caused much opposition, indignation, and stupor among modern scholars, being seen as a rigid way of setting limits to the evolution of a literary genre. It should, however, be connected with the Aristotelian teleological perspectives on the genre: it developed as if it had been a living organism until reaching its full potential.<sup>6</sup> Importantly, this point regards the genre in retrospect.<sup>7</sup> By Aristotelian standards, tragedy attained complete fulfillment somewhere in the second half of the fifth century (though the historical frame is not strictly set), meaning, in a sense, that it could be *fundamentally* recognized as such and thus distinguished from other types of performance genres (especially from dithyramb and satyr drama).<sup>8</sup> This does not imply, in my view, that Aristotle considers that no changes at all were possible in tragic practice after that fulfillment: as a matter of fact, he signals at times differences between fifth- and fourth-century tragic trends.<sup>9</sup> But, he seems to regard the transformations occurring after the attainment of the generic nature (*physis*) as inconsequential with respect to the essence of tragedy. Immediately following the broad theoretical point, Aristotle illustrates more

4 For a nuanced discussion of the growth of literary genres in the *Poetics* in connection with Aristotelian ideas about biological development, see most recently Heath 2013, 64–8; biological organisms have inner principles in potential that later may become fully manifest—completion can be achieved upon favorable conditions (i.e. attaining the nature of something).

5 Battezzato 2013, 94–9 offers a concise and compelling analysis (with a review of previous scholarship) of the links between tragedy and dithyramb, starting from *Poetics* 4 and moving to explicit references to dithyramb in extant and fragmentary tragedies.

6 Thus, for instance, Janko 1987, 77–8 rightly links this attainment of the full nature of tragedy, *physis*, to similar statements about the nature of a man, horse, or house (*Pol.* 1.1252b32; cf. *Phys.* 2.1; *Metaph.* 2.4); cf. Husain 2002, 67–9; on a tradition of such classification in Aristotle and Greek fifth century thought, see Halliwell 1998, 94–6.

7 An excellent reappraisal of Aristotle's view of genres in general is offered by Rotstein 2010, 69–85, with a useful review of the previous scholarship.

8 Halliwell 1998, 94–6 offers a clear analysis of this topic.

9 E.g., *Po.* 6.1450b7–8: poets of old (*archaioi*) have their characters speak civically (*politikós*), whereas contemporary tragedians make them speak rhetorically (*rhetorikós*).

specifically certain fundamental steps in the evolution of the tragic genre, and in this context Aeschylus' name appears (*Po.* 4.1449a15–18):<sup>10</sup>

καὶ τό τε τῶν ὑποκριτῶν πλῆθος ἐξ ἑνὸς εἰς δύο πρῶτος Αἰσχύλος ἤγαγε καὶ τὰ τοῦ χοροῦ ἡλάττωσε καὶ τὸν λόγον πρωταγωνιστεῖν παρεσκεύασεν.

Aeschylus first increased the number of actors from one to two, reduced the [parts] of the chorus, and made speech play the leading role.<sup>11</sup>

Next listed (*Po.* 4.1449a18–19) is Sophocles, who introduced a third actor and scenery (*skênographia*). Further developments concern the magnitude of tragic plots and diction, formally separating tragedy from earlier more trivial forms of performance, related to satyr play composition and dance, and gaining gravitas (*Po.* 4.1449a19–28).<sup>12</sup> The Aristotelian model of gradual differentiation of tragedy as well as other genres from a Dionysian matrix has been recently reevaluated.<sup>13</sup> Yet, how should we interpret the roles of the individual tragedians, and of Aeschylus in particular, in this chapter of the *Poetics*? First, Aeschylus is credited here with a major development in the history of tragedy: the increase in the number of actors and the reduction of the importance of the chorus. Despite this acknowledgment, later in the treatise, neither the tragedian nor his trilogies receives extensive analysis. Among the causes for this omission, we may list, perhaps, the fact that the chorus remains

10 For the text of the *Poetics* I am using Kasel's 1965 edition.

11 Nervegna 2014, 166–72 reconsiders carefully the presence of Aeschylus' drama on the fourth-century stage, as well as the relevance of the topic for Aristotle's appraisal. On page 171, she notes that Aeschylus appears to have been groundbreaking in the early fifth century but already out of fashion by the end of the same century, as *Poetics* 4 later implies. See also Nervegna, this volume.

12 Battezzato 2013, 94 draws attention to what is sometimes perceived as a contradiction, as well as the scholarly debate surrounding it, between the idea that tragedy derives from dithyramb a few lines earlier in the *Poetics* 4 and this statement that links the origin of tragedy to satyr drama. The two statements (*Po.* 4.1449a10 and *Po.* 4.1449a19–24) need not to be seen as contradictory: tragedy derives from dithyramb (which provides the chorus/actor format) and develops from *something like* satyr-drama to a more dignified form. At any rate, it is clear, as Janko 1987, 79, for example, points out, that Aristotle places the origin of all tragedy, dithyramb, and satyr play together in Dionysiac ritual.

13 Depew 2007, 126–42 offers a thorough reappraisal of the *Poetics* 4 in connection with broader Aristotelian methods.

prominent in Aeschylus<sup>14</sup> compared to later tragedians.<sup>15</sup> Since Aristotle defines tragedy as *mimesis* of an action (6.1449b24),<sup>16</sup> he appears less interested in its choral component, and, therefore, less inclined to comment on Aeschylean drama. Furthermore, trilogies may not be of interest in the *Poetics*,<sup>17</sup> as they span over generations and Aristotle overall praises the concentration of tragic plot (*mythos*) in the treatise. For example, he casually notes that there is a difference in scale between tragedy, aiming to keep its action within a day's span, and epic, without temporal limit, although early tragic poets had no such limitations—and here he perhaps has Aeschylus in mind, although no names are given (*Po.* 5.1449b12–6). Furthermore, Aristotle considers the pleasure yielded by tragedy more concentrated and, therefore, more intense than that of epic (*Po.* 26.1462a17–b1), inviting us to imagine how it would be like if someone turned Sophocles' *Oedipus* into an epic the size of the *Iliad* (26.1462b1–3). In this light, it seems hardly surprising that Aristotle comments on an individual play of the *Oresteia*, the *Libation Bearers*, as we shall see, rather than on the trilogy as a whole.

A final question regarding *Poetics* 4 arises. Does Aristotle place Aeschylus' practical innovations, namely the addition of the actor and the reduction of the chorus, correctly in the history of tragedy? Generally, it has been accepted that Aeschylus indeed contributed to these changes. When compared to predecessors, such as Phrynichus, he likely diminished choral singing and dancing in favor of more spoken exchanges between actors, as in the above cited passage from the *Poetics* (καὶ τὰ τοῦ χοροῦ ἡλάττωσε καὶ τὸν λόγον πρωταγωνιστεῖν παρεσκεύασεν, 4.1449a17–18).<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, assuming that the transformations took place in a simple chronological order appears to be a mistake, as

14 Janko 1987, 78 plausibly suggests this as a reason for Aristotle having “surprisingly little to say” about Aeschylus after this initial mention in 4.1449a16.

15 For a comparison regarding the handling of the chorus in the extant dramas of the three tragedians, see Rutherford 2012, 43–4, e.g., choral beginnings become out of fashion after Aeschylus; the longer choral odes, with hymnic themes, become shorter and less frequent in Sophocles and Euripides.

16 *Mimesis* in the *Poetics* has been translated as “imitation” (Heath 1996), “representation” (Janko 1987), or left as such (Halliwell 1987). Since no English term captures the Greek nuances of the term very well, I have kept it unchanged; on the complexity of the aesthetic notion as well as its particularities in Aristotle, see Halliwell 2002, 1–36 and 151–33.

17 Halliwell 1987, 186 rightly notes Aristotle's absence of interest in Aeschylean trilogy: although the *Libation Bearers* is given as an example in chapter 16, there is no analysis of the *Oresteia* as a whole.

18 On this, see, for example, Herrington 41–2, who adduces evidence from Aristophanes' *Wasps* 219–20 (Phrynichus' plays remembered for their humming song) to support

there must have been tremendous compositional variation in the early fifth-century.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, Aeschylus himself did not “progress” in a linear manner from writing plays with an enhanced role of the chorus to plays with reduced choral participation,<sup>20</sup> although this has been a common assumption, probably under the influence of the remark in the *Poetics*. For example, Aeschylus’ *Suppliants*, long believed to have been the earliest composition of Aeschylus, due to the prominent function of its chorus, appears to have been in fact composed late in the tragedian’s career, with a first performance in 464/463 BCE.<sup>21</sup> In conclusion, it is most likely Aristotle’s observations in this chapter of the *Poetics* regarding a broad movement from enhanced choral participation to more dialogic interactions in the history of early Greek tragedy should be regarded as correct from a broad theoretical perspective, but this in no way ought to be seen as simple and linear.

One more detail remains to be considered here, namely that Aeschylus first brought the number of actors from one to two, as above noted (*Po.* 4.1449a15–16, καὶ τὸ τε τῶν ὑποκριτῶν πλῆθος ἐξ ἑνὸς εἰς δύο πρῶτος Αἰσχύλος ἤγαγε), while Sophocles then increased the number to three and introduced the painted *skene*, *skenographia*.<sup>22</sup> This observation on the number of actors has rightly been seen as a reflection of Aristotle’s interest in increased dramatic complexity.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, it has also been ridiculed as well as challenged. With satiric verve, Knox opens an article on the topic as follows “‘Three and scene painting Sophocles.’ So runs a typically crabbed sentence of Aristotle’s *Poetics*.”<sup>24</sup> And he continues in the same vein: “Why did Aeschylus not invent

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Aristotle’s assertions regarding Aeschylus’ innovative reduction of the songs and expansion of actors’ dialogue.

- 19 Garvie 1969, 94–115 provides a thorough discussion of the structure of early Greek tragedies, with reference to various fragments, the *Poetics*, and other relevant sources.
- 20 For examples, the three plays of the *Oresteia* use the chorus in very different ways and even within the individual plays the distribution of the choral song varies (for example, from a large proportion in *Agamemnon* early on to less prominence as the play progresses).
- 21 Papadopolou 2011, 15–24 (with an account of earlier scholarly debates) using the evidence of POxy 2256 fr.3, proposes this date, as she rejects the idea of an early composition with a delayed production.
- 22 Hammond 1972, 443 notes that Vitruvius ascribes the first painted *scaena* to Agatharchus, who introduced it for Aeschylus (*De Archit. Praef.*7.2). Overall on the changes introduced by Sophocles as signaled in the *Poetics*, see also Kirby 2012, 412–8.
- 23 Thus, for example, Halliwell 1987, 84 writes: “Changes in the numbers of actors are mentioned not simply as a technical convention, but as a precondition for the dramatic portrayal of action of increasing complexity,” a point with which I concur.
- 24 Knox 1972, 104.



a third actor as he had earlier in his career added a second? Why was it Sophocles who introduced a third? Why did Euripides not introduce a fourth? And, for that matter, being Euripides, a fifth?"<sup>25</sup> We can easily sense here the frustration with the Aristotelian model of the generic evolution. But Knox's rhetorical questions may be worth considering, first, from a theoretical and, then, from a practical point of view. First, why does Aristotle not assume that more actors ought to be added in order to attain the perfection of tragedy? Trying to answer this hypothetical question may help us better understand that Aristotle does not simply imagine how tragedy could reach its completion as an ideal genre. As he combines some empirical observations about literary genres (inductive approach) with deduction, he uses the latter deductive method starting from a *telos*, from a final point, working his way backwards.<sup>26</sup> Thus, *Poetics* 4 considers tragedy as is, with three professional actors,<sup>27</sup> as its end point, without speculating on what it may become. Perhaps it is only fair to wonder, would Aristotle still have considered an *Oedipus* (since he himself invites us to imagine an "epic" *Oedipus*) with five actors and even less choral song a tragedy, or something else? I would venture to say yes, he probably would have still regarded it as tragedy, as long as that increase in the number of actors and further decrease in choral parts would not transform the essence of the genre in his view. Yet, again, it seems important to stress here that Aristotle takes as the generic completion a form of drama historically known to him and not as a speculative ideal.

Let's consider Knox's questions from a practical standpoint. Is Aristotle technically right in saying that Aeschylus brings on stage two actors and, subsequently, Sophocles three? This rule presumably refers to the fact that only three speaking actors were available to a director (*didaskalos*), although more could be physically present during a scene on the stage.<sup>28</sup> Several of Aeschylus' extant plays, such as the *Persians*, *Seven against Thebes*, and the *Suppliants*, could, indeed, have been performed with only two speaking characters, leaving sufficient time for actors to change costumes and play

25 Knox 1972, 104–5.

26 Rotstein 2010, 74–5, with footnote 57 explains clearly the two methods Aristotle uses as literary historian; for his deductive methods, see *PA* 639b–640a and the discussion of Lloyd 1996, 32: Aristotle often deduces the antecedent of the biological *telos* (e.g., health or man).

27 On the basic staging implications and historical background of the three actors rule in Greek tragedy, see, for example, Taplin 1985, 10.

28 This was perhaps in place to offer equal opportunities during dramatic competitions, rather than to impose restrictions on playwrights arbitrarily, as Marshall 1994 proposes (and in passing 2010, 258).

several parts; and, even though Athens allowed a third actor around the 460s, Aeschylus' drama does not overall presuppose the complex use of three actor scenes as does Sophocles.<sup>29</sup> Thus, Aristotle seems to be generally right in his assessment. However, Aeschylus' drama is not always limited to two speaking actors, as the *Oresteia* proves. If a silent actor (Cassandra) increases the dramatic tension in a scene of the *Agamemnon*,<sup>30</sup> in the *Libation Bearers* (900–2), a character, though silent for a long time, does speak in the presence of two others: Pylades gives advice to his friend on how to act, with Clytemnestra and Orestes interacting on stage.<sup>31</sup> In the final play of the trilogy, the *Eumenides*, the trial scene seems to contain three speaking actors: Orestes, Apollo, and Athena.<sup>32</sup> In fact, ancient sources ascribe the introduction of the third actor, which could be dated between 466 and 458 BCE, not only to Sophocles but also to Aeschylus.<sup>33</sup> One of these sources is Themistius (ca. 317–388 CE), a close follower and admirer of Aristotle, who in his *Oration* (27.337B) gives an account of the development of tragedy that is reminiscent of the *Poetics* 4, but mentions among the dramatic innovations “Aeschylus and the third actor” (26.316D).<sup>34</sup> Finally, we might decide that the introduction of the third actor was a matter of dispute in the fourth century, or question the statement in the *Poetics*, or doubt the later sources. However, there may be a simpler solution. It appears clear that Aeschylus used a third speaking actor sporadically, for special effects in the *Oresteia*, whereas the additional actor becomes customary in Sophoclean plays. Aristotle mentions broad and *consistent* dramatic trends and thus opts for Sophocles as bringing the number of speaking actors to three. He probably does not mean that Sophocles' predecessors never used a third speaking character, but that they did not do so systematically.

In conclusion, the brief evaluation of the role of Aeschylus in the development of drama in the *Poetics* 4 can help us understand several features of Aristotle's approach to literary history. 1. In appraising tragic genre, Aristotle

29 Rosenmeyer 1983, 48.

30 Yet, she speaks only after the exit of Clytemnestra, and Knox discusses the scene and the significance of the silent actor at length.

31 As Knox 1972, 109 himself points out in his article; cf. Rosenmeyer 1983, for a full reappraisal, see Marshall 2003.

32 For a recent reappraisal of the staging of this play, see Mitchell-Boyask 2013, 44–96.

33 Hammond 1972, 444, with note 106, cites, besides our passage from the *Poetics* (favoring Sophocles), on the Aeschylean side, Themist. *Orat.* 26.316D and *Vit. Aesch.* 15.

34 Janko 1987, 65 translates the passage and then comments on page 95 that “it is odd that the introduction of the second actor is omitted”—suggesting that the passage might contain an error “the third” instead of “the second” but leaves “the third” unchanged, as Aeschylus' *Vita* ascribes both the second and the third actor to the tragedian.

does not consider its ideal or hypothetical evolution but deducts a completion of tragedy as recognizable and distinct from other Dionysiac forms; 2. He looks backwards, from a historical perspective, noting the major and *consistent* transformations, in which he sees Aeschylus as an important link; 3. The Aeschylean contributions to the growth of tragedy in this chapter of the *Poetics* have to be taken very broadly and not as nuanced analysis. Thus, the mention of the dramatist's role in reducing choral participation, while it appears to depict with accuracy a trend in dramatic compositions from the early to later fifth-century, does not imply either a smooth or a strictly chronological development in Aeschylean drama itself. Similarly, Aeschylus' use of a second, and Sophocles' of a third speaking actor should not be interpreted in absolute terms but simply as an overall comparative evaluation.

*Other Certain and Less Certain References to Aeschylean Tragedies  
in the Poetics*

Several other scattered references to Aeschylean plays in the *Poetics* do not seem intended to evaluate the importance of the tragedian's drama, or even to analyze its composition *per se*, but they are rather illustrations offered to reinforce Aristotle's own ideas about successful dramatic techniques.<sup>35</sup> Let us examine the certain examples first. A description of the elements of a complex plot, namely reversal (περιπέτεια) and recognition (ἀναγνώρισις) occurs in the *Poetics* 11 (1452a22–1452b8), the latter (ἀναγνώρισις) being defined as a change (μεταβολή) from ignorance (ἐξ ἀγνοίας) to knowledge (εἰς γνῶσιν), leading to friendship or hostility (11.1452a29–31).<sup>36</sup> *Poetics* 16 (1454b19–1455a21) returns to recognition and ranks it into five types, and in this later chapter, with higher frequency of references to tragedies than anywhere else in the treatise,<sup>37</sup> we find a mention of Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*. The extensive classification proceeds from the least skillful recognition to the most sophisticated kind as follows: the first (and worst) type is through tokens (διὰ τῶν σημείων, 1454b21), which

35 I have very briefly discussed this point in an earlier encyclopedia article (2013).

36 Exceptionally great is the recognition that occurs together with a reversal, thus producing a shock that amplifies pity and fear, as in the *Oedipus* (11.1452a32–3). My presentation here is necessarily very simplified due to space constraints—for a detailed analysis of the definition of recognition and the philological problems surrounding it, see, for example, MacFarlane 2000.

37 Halliwell 1987, 143, points out underlining carefully other oddities of this chapter, both textual problems and content wise—the fact that the classification of recognition appears to be in itself exceptional, since elsewhere in the treatise Aristotle refrains from giving a similar typology (though he could have done so when discussing reversal or *hamartia*).

could be either bodily (for example, scars) or external (necklaces); second, are types made up by the poet (πεποιημένοι ὑπὸ τοῦ ποιητοῦ, 1454b30–1); third is recognition through memory (διὰ μνήμης, 1454b37), fourth, from reasoning (ἐκ συλλογισμοῦ, 1455a4), and, finally,<sup>38</sup> fifth (and best) from the events themselves (ἐξ αὐτῶν τῶν πραγμάτων, 16.1455a17). The first two types are described as lacking artistry, the third neutrally, while the last two rank at the top. Together with three other subsequent examples,<sup>39</sup> Aeschylus' play illustrates the fourth type of recognition, from reasoning (16.1455a4–6):

τετάρτη δὲ ἡ ἐκ συλλογισμοῦ, οἷον ἐν Χοηφόροις, ὅτι ὁμοίος τις ἐλήλυθεν, ὁμοίος δὲ οὐθεις ἄλλ' ἢ Ὀρέστης, οὗτος ἄρα ἐλήλυθεν.

The fourth [type of recognition] is through reasoning (lit. syllogism), as in the *Libation Bearers*: that someone similar has come, no one else is similar [to Electra] except for Orestes, therefore, it is he who has come.

Let us review the Aeschylean scene. It starts with Electra noticing that a footprint and a dedicated lock at the tomb of her father resembles her own (*Cho.* 166–76). The chorus suggests that Orestes might have sent the offering (*Cho.* 177–80). Later, Orestes, comes out from his hiding place and convinces his sister, who hesitates to accept him at first and fears treachery (214–24), through reasoning (225–34), that the lock she found earlier is his, as were the footprints, and then adds to the proofs a token woven earlier by Electra herself.<sup>40</sup>

38 There is a subsidiary type (16.1455a13) resulting from false reasoning (*ek paralogismou*) but I am not including it separately, as there are textual problems and it can be seen as a variant of this reasoning.

39 The examples following the *Libation Bearers* are: the Sophist Polyidus' recognition regarding Iphigenia, on which I (2009, 54–5) have suggested some possible interpretations; Theodectes' *Tydeus* (on the playwright, in general, see Hanink 2014, 199–200), and a scene in *Sons of Phineus* (whose author we do not know, perhaps Sophocles), as Janko 1987, 115 suggests, or, perhaps, Aeschylus' *Phineus*, (as Karamanou 2010, 394 proposes as an alternative, without rejecting the Sophoclean possibility), or that of a fourth century play. Hanink 2014, 206 notes that, overall, Aristotle habitually groups a fifth-century tragic example with a fourth century play, but here the unusually high number of illustrations deviates from the usual pattern of the treatise.

40 Hogan 1984, 113 notes on line 231 that Orestes offers “a piece of weaving for assurance,” after being suspected by Electra of weaving a net of treachery (line 220). This last token shown by Orestes certainly would be labeled as hackneyed by Aristotle, who does not comment on it but rebukes this use of tokens in similar situations. For example, in *Po.* 16.1455a18–20, Aristotle praises the first recognition of Iphigenia in Euripides' *IT* by her

Thus, brother and sister reunite in joy. Now there is something strange in Aristotle's choosing this particular example, as sometimes the commentators on the *Poetics* acknowledge:<sup>41</sup> the recognition involves a great number of tokens (lock, a footprint that could be considered as bodily type, and also a final additional woven proof). Indeed, Euripides appears to have alluded to this scene in his *Electra* (518–44) and *Orestes* (233–4), as his characters imply that tokens could easily be misleading.<sup>42</sup> Specifically, Electra doubts the signs found at the tomb of her father in Euripides' homonymous play, observing that people who are not relatives can have similar hair (527–31) and similarly questions the likeness of footprints (534–7). Some have taken the Euripidean heroine's lines as a reference to the probability argument in Greek rhetoric, or, at any rate, as a demonstration of the improbability of the signs used in the Aeschylean recognition.<sup>43</sup>

It is, then, rather surprising that Aristotle, who is keen to point out dramatic implausibility, finds this Aeschylean scene to be quite compelling. Why? Even though all types of recognition, except for the last one (from the events themselves), presuppose tokens of some sort,<sup>44</sup> some types employ them better than others. Aristotle may like the scene from the *Libation Bearers* (166–80) because Electra and the chorus consider how the tokens could reveal the identity of Orestes through a kind of *sylogistic* progression of the sort echoed in the *Poetics* in a simplified manner (16.1455a4–6). This *verbal* explanation in

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brother, but he criticizes Iphigenia's recognizing Orestes (*Po.* 16.1454b30–2) as the brother: he remembers and describes a nicely woven cloth made by his sister in their childhood (*IT* 816–9). This is very similar to the Aeschylean Orestes in *Cho.*, who displays the woven piece.

- 41 Halliwell 1987, 144 points out the oddity of this example from *Cho.*, "Electra's inference is neither the only nor, arguably, the decisive factor in her recognition of Orestes." Heath 1996, 56, n. 75 underlines that Aristotle is not primarily thinking here of "recognition through reasoning from signs" but of instances in which a character reveals his identity to another. I agree with the general point, but Aristotle seems to emphasize Electra's reasoning and not the final moment of recognition culminating with the revelation of identity.
- 42 Aeschylus' trilogy may have been revived around the 420s, making Euripides' audience freshly aware of the similarities; on the Euripidean allusions to the recognition in *Cho.*, see, e.g., Wright 2008, 79–81 and Torrance 2013, 51–3.
- 43 Goebel 1983, 347–56 interprets the Euripidean scene as a parody of the rhetorical argument of the probable. For a more moderate view, with interesting additional suggestions on the links between this and rhetorical practice, see Sansone 2012, 166–9.
- 44 Best is the last kind, from the events themselves, because *only this* type of recognition can do without tokens, while the second best is through reasoning (*ek syllogismou*, 16.1455a20–1).

drama can perhaps point to Aristotle's own definition of syllogism in the *Prior Analytics* (1.24b18–20) as *logos*, in which certain things being supposed, something different results from necessity of those things being thus. The key here is not the immediate acceptance of the tokens, which receives early criticism,<sup>45</sup> but the *verbal* reasoning around them. Truly, recognition does not immediately take place after this inference (as it may appear in the *Poetics*) but is delayed in the play until Orestes appears and has to further prove his identity, which Aristotle omits in his brief account. In addition, surely the logic behind considering the offering of Orestes' lock of hair may be all flawed, as Euripides' *Electra* seems to emphasize, but that reasoning is all *explained* in Aeschylus, and this is, I suspect, what Aristotle appreciates.<sup>46</sup>

Next, an analysis of the appropriate style in tragedy in the *Poetics* 22 centers on the following principle: "virtue of diction" (ἀρετὴ λέξεως ... ἀρετὴ) lies in being clear (σαφὴς) without being banal (ταπεινή, 22.1458a18). Multiple examples illustrate this delicate balance. Specifically, when discussing the use of rare words, Aristotle compares the phrasing found in the lines of two (now lost) tragedies, both entitled *Philoctetes*, one by Aeschylus, the other by Euripides (*Po.* 22.1458b19–24). Aeschylus wrote the following iambic verse "the cancer that eats the flesh of my foot;" Euripides kept it but replaced one word (ἐσθίει, "eats" with θοινᾶται, "feasts upon", 22.1458b23–4),<sup>47</sup> which makes his line sound beautiful (*kalon*), while the Aeschylean version appears ordinary (*euteles*). This remains a casual example to support a theoretical point. Prompted by the

45 In the recognition through tokens, too, Aristotle compares a worse and better use, as in the case of Odysseus' scar: Odysseus' direct confirmation of his identity by showing his scar (*Od.* 21.188–224) is considered less skillful than Euryclea's accidental discovery of the scar in the bath scene (*Od.* 19.386–475) in the *Po.* 16.1454b25–30.

46 It would certainly be easier to confirm this point if we could access the other three examples given here with the *Libation Bearers* as illustrations for recognition through logical inference (*dia syllogismou*). Karamanou 2010, 394 tries to reconstruct plot elements surrounding the reference to the *Phineads* (despite the uncertainty surrounding its authorship—see note 35 above): the sons of Phineus suffered at the hands of their stepmother and were later saved by their cousins, the Boreads. The recognition appears to regard the punishment of the stepmother and some other woman accomplice, who recognize the place of the exposure of the children as the place of their own death. One could speculate on a syllogistic inference of some sort: this was the place where the boys were left to die, we were prophesized to die in the same place, so here we have to die.

47 Aesch. fr. 253 (Radt; cf. Eur. fr. 792; as Rutherford 2012, 20 observes, in this case Euripides seems to seek a more colorful term than his predecessor, noting (n. 56) that both verbs appear in prose, particularly *esthio* appears only here in Aeschylus, three times in Sophocles, and four in Euripides; the other verb is frequent in Euripides but not so in the earlier tragedians.

easily comparable lines, it does not intend to judge the overall style of the two dramatists.<sup>48</sup>

Let us turn now to less certain references. Aristotle recommends that a tragedy ought not be epic-like (*epopoïkon*) (i.e. with multiple episodes, or story-lines [*polymuthon*]), in its composition but concentrated (*Po.* 18.1456a10–11). Then, he points out that those dramatists who produced a *Sack of Troy* as a whole and not as Euripides did, or a *Niobe*, and not as Aeschylus did, either fail or compete poorly (ἄσοι πέρσιν Ἰλίου ὅλην ἐποίησαν καὶ μὴ κατὰ μέρος ὥσπερ Ἐυριπίδης, < ἦ > Νιόβην καὶ μὴ ὥσπερ Αἰχύλος, ἢ ἐκπίπτουσιν ἢ κακῶς ἀγωνίζονται, *Po.* 18.1456a 16–7). The title *Niobe* (in one manuscript Νιόβην) seems to be a textual corruption here as there appear to have been no epic poems based on this myth. In order to solve the textual problem, we have another proposed conjecture by Schmidt (*Thebaid*)<sup>49</sup> or the suggestion of Else, to which I shall return, namely that *Niobe(n)* could be a corruption of another Greek word, namely *Hekaben*. Furthermore, “or” < ἦ > is a generally—but not universally<sup>50</sup>—accepted emendation by Vahlen. Despite the foggy philological detail, the general line of thought emerges with clarity, and so does the Euripidean example. However, the way in which we decide to solve the textual corruption can completely change our interpretation of the reference to Aeschylus’ work. Thus, overall, a dramatist should eschew presenting a string of events as in the Epic Cycle (for example, Arctinus’ *Sack of Troy*, which may be directly referred here) and follow instead the example of Euripides’ treatment of the Trojan War (such as, his *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*). Now how are we to interpret the Aeschylean reference?

*Reading 1.* If we accept Vahlen’s emendation “or” and *Thebaid* instead of *Niobe*, then we can produce a first coherent interpretation: “or a *Thebaid*,

48 On other ancient comparisons between the Aeschylean and Euripidean style, starting with Aristophanes and continuing after Aristotle, see Rutherford 2012, 18–20. The influence of Aristotle’s view on style (including Aeschylean) on later literary criticism is also discussed by Schironi 2009, 300–3. Müller 2007, starting from Aristotelian remarks (at 205 discussing the *Po.* 22), evaluates the influence of Euripides’ *Philoctetes* on fourth-century rhetorical texts, especially *Rh. ad Alexandrum*.

49 Kassel 1965, 29, *ad loc.* lists Schmidt’s conjecture *Thēbaida*; *Niobên*; Vahlen 1874 ‘ἦ’ (or) and excises [*Niobe*,] reading after the conjecture only “or like Aeschylus.” Tarán and Gutas 2012, 281 write: “Vahlen’s conjecture is probably right, for no Epic *Niobe* is known”; then, on page 410, in the section dedicated to the Greco-Arabic apparatus and commentary, the reading *Niobên* in manuscript omega seems to be confirmed. Janko’s translation (1987, 122) adopts the reading *Thebaida*.

50 Contra Else 1957, 546, who notes that no manuscript supports it.

and not as Aeschylus." Likewise, playwrights are wrong to compose in the manner of the epic *Thebaid*<sup>51</sup> (since there is no epic poem known to us on the story of Niobe), and not as Aeschylus did (presumably in his *Seven against Thebes*). In this reading, therefore, both Euripides and Aeschylus appear to be praised side by side, as they illustrate the right way of adapting mythical material to their genres.

*Reading 2.* If we reject Vahlen's emendation "or" (< ἢ >) and read *Nioben* as a corruption of *Hekaben*, as Else proposes, then we arrive at a completely different interpretation. In this case, playwrights should compose on the Trojan theme, as Euripides did, in his *Hecuba*, and not as Aeschylus did (perhaps implying his Ajax trilogy).<sup>52</sup> In this case, praise would go only to Euripides' way of constructing his plots, presented in contrast with Aeschylus' drama.

While both readings (1 and 2) seem possible from a philological standpoint, both involve a great deal of speculation on the Aeschylean works that Aristotle may have had in mind. Else's reading (2) may suggest another reason for which Aristotle disregards Aeschylean trilogies: because he may consider them as episodic, but, this remains unsaid in the *Poetics*. Regardless of the interpretation adopted, we should remind ourselves that Aristotle underscores here a theoretical principle, the concentration of the tragic plot, and exemplifies it casually with references to plays of Euripides and Aeschylus, without undertaking any serious appraisal of the two dramatists.

Perhaps Aeschylus' *Mysians* receives unfavorable mention in the *Poetics* 24, in the context of an analysis of the types of events selected for a tragic plot. Again a principle governs the examples: impossible incidents that are likely (ἀδύνατα εἰκότα) should be chosen instead of possible incidents that are implausible (δύνατα ἀπίθανα, 24.1460a26–7). All in all, plots ought to avoid the improbable; if incidents of this sort occur, they should be mentioned outside the main plot (for example, Oedipus not knowing in what way Laius was murdered) and not within the plot, as the person reporting the fabricated story about the death of Orestes at the Pythian Games in the *Electra*,<sup>53</sup> or as the person who

51 For a useful survey of the fragmentary epic poems, see, for example, Davies 2001, 22–8 (on the *Thebaid*) and 71–6 (on the *Sack of Troy*).

52 Else 1956, 546–7 presents the reasons for this reading in full detail; he thinks that Aristotle may imply here Aeschylus' Ajax trilogy, which resembled the epic structure more than Euripides' concentrated plot in the *Hecuba*.

53 These references concern Sophocles' *OT* (112–3), and the same playwright's *EL* (680–763); the sheer length of the report seems to matter in how intrusive Aristotle



goes from Tegea to Mysia without speaking in the *Mysians*. The man is most likely Telephus, on whom Apollo may have imposed silence as expiation for the murder of his kin.<sup>54</sup> It is uncertain whether Aristotle refers here specifically to Aeschylus' tragedy, as he simply says "in the *Mysians*" (24.1460a32). Aeschylus doubtlessly had a reputation for bringing silent characters on stage,<sup>55</sup> but this does not prove his authorship of the play mentioned in the *Poetics*, when, in fact, several (now lost) plays bearing this name were also written by Sophocles<sup>56</sup> and several other dramatists.<sup>57</sup> Surely, Aristotle does not have to name the author, since his audience should be familiar with the tragedies mentioned. Yet another reason may be, as I have already suggested, that he is not, by and large, interested in passing judgment on tragedians, or even on their plays, but mostly concerned with providing illustrations for his theoretical preferences. Thus, obviously, in the examples preceding the *Mysians*, both praise and criticism attach to passages from tragedies by Sophocles.

Finally, a reference to at least one Aeschylean play occurs in Aristotle's classification of four species (εἶδη) of tragedy (*Po.* 18.1455b32). Those types include (18.1455b32–1456a3): 1. the complex (πεπλεγμένη) tragedy, with reversal and recognition; 2. tragedy concerned with suffering (παθητική, e.g., *Ajax* and *Ixion*); 3. the character-centered tragedy (ἡθικὴ, *Women of Pythia* and *Peleus*); and, 4. the fourth type—the text is corrupt [οἷς], and two different emendations are proposed, either ἀπλὴ (simple) or ὄψις (spectacle)—the "simple" kind or the "spectacle" based, depending on how one decides to restore a damaged text here<sup>58</sup> (e.g., *Phorcydes*, *Prometheus*, and the plays taking place in

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considers the narrative of such incidents, leading to favorable or unfavorable appraisal.

- 54 Montiglio 2000, 21–2 proposes this, comparing Telephus' situation to Orestes': Telephus' silence may have functioned as a religious form of purification.
- 55 This has led some commentators to assume that Aeschylus must be the author here, e.g. Lucas 1968, 231; contra, see Podlecki 2013, 133 and n. 8.
- 56 Sommerstein 2008, 150–1 convincingly argues, after comparing tragic fragments, that Aristotle's criticism (*Po.* 24. 1460a30–2) does not concern Sophocles' play, because we can tell from *Soph.* fr.411 that Telephus asks right away in what country he is, so he cannot be the silent character referred to here. However, Aristotle may still refer to a play by another dramatist (see n. 57 below). Storey and Allan 2005, 114 briefly discuss the Sophoclean treatment of the myth of Telephus and how it may have differed from Aeschylus' tragedy.
- 57 Thorburn 2005, 359 lists besides Aeschylus' *Myssoi*, (*Radt* vol.3, fr. 143–5), under the same title, a play by Sophocles and one by Agathon (fr. 3a Snell).
- 58 Halliwell 1987, 15 and Heath 1996, 29 opt for the reading "simple" (Sussemihl's emendation) in connection with the discussion following in *Po.* 24, and so do Tarán and Gutas 2012, 280 and 407, while Janko 1987, 25, following Bywater's restoration, opts for "spectacle."

*Hades*). Regardless of our take, the last category mentions one play ascribed to Aeschylus, the *Phorcydes*, the title pertaining to the Graeae whom Perseus outwits.<sup>59</sup> The other could possibly be associated with the same playwright, although the authorship of *Prometheus* (*Bound*—if that is meant) has been debated<sup>60</sup> and although we cannot be sure—perhaps the plays in *Hades* regard the Aeschylean *Psychagogoi* and *Sisyphus*.<sup>61</sup> If this last type of tragedy indeed refers to the spectacle,<sup>62</sup> then it may be linked to other statements in the *Poetics*, such as criticism of those dramatists aiming to produce only the “monstrous” (τερὰ τῶδες), instead of the “fearful” (φοβερόν) (*Po.* 14.1453b8–10).<sup>63</sup> However, this remains highly speculative, depending not only on our interpretation of an uncertain text, but also on further assumptions about the authorship of several plays named only by title, as well as on their connections to further Aristotelian evaluations. In fact, Aristotle himself does not critique here any of the four types of tragedies, which he certainly could have done, if he highly disliked any, but simply lists them.

### *Conclusions to Aeschylus in Poetics*

After a general statement giving Aeschylus an important role in the development of tragedy, examples from the playwright's tragedies appear to be rare. Those references that do occur in passing underscore theoretical points. Thus, one should not attach great significance to the fact that a line from Euripides

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- 59 Ogden 2013, 86 provides a reconstruction of the plot, with a discussion of a fragment; in his view the Aeschylean tragedy likely shaped the Greek myth of the Graeae and Gorgons. For more on the myth see pages 97–8.
- 60 See Pattoni 2013, 165–6 for a thorough analysis; often commentators of the *Po.* assume that *PV* is referred to here, but other plays as well could be implied.
- 61 Aeschylus appears to have written two *Sisyphus* plays: the *Stone-Roller* (*Petrokylistes*) and the *Runaway* (*Drapetes*), the former taking place in *Hades*, but the latter probably not being located in the underworld; the *Stone-Roller* seems to be satyric rather than tragic; cf. Sommerstein 2008, 236–9 for a convenient summary. However, Sutton 1974, 126–7 notes that *Drapetes* and *Petrokylistes* can be seen as alternate titles to the same play. More importantly for our discussion, the Aeschylean play is considered satyric by association with an Euripidean *Sisyphus*, also satyric.
- 62 In support of this view, see, for example, Lucas 1968, 188; Janko 1987, 121; and Podlecki 2013, 135 with a discussion of this in connection with *Vita Aeschyli* 7, Radt.
- 63 For this interpretation see particularly Podlecki 2013, 134–5 with emphasis on *opsis* in Aeschylean drama, and Pattoni 2013, 162–8 with an informed analysis of the significance of this fourth category for Aristotle's *Poetics*.

may be praised as better than a line from Aeschylus, since sometimes even passages from the same playwright (Sophocles) could be praised and censored side by side. In fact, the relative disinterest in citing from Aeschylus in the *Poetics* could be explained in light of Aristotle's own preferences: concentration of plot, which may reflect in the missing analysis of trilogies as a whole, or emphasis on tragedy as action, which may reflect in the lack of interest in plays with extensive choral participation.

### Aeschylus in Other Treatises

Aristotle cites Aeschylus sporadically in other treatises.<sup>64</sup> In the *Rhetoric*, for example, in the context of the analysis of emotions in the second book, an Aeschylean line, "kin also knows how to envy (*phthonein*)" (2.10.1388a8),<sup>65</sup> supports a general argument that we envy people who are close to us in various respects, such as age, fame, and time.<sup>66</sup> In the *History of Animals* 633a16–30, a long tragic passage that Aristotle ascribes to Aeschylus, but which may not be Aeschylean after all,<sup>67</sup> reinforces the belief that a hoopoe is able to change its appearance and color.

Besides this type of tangential quotation, there is one reference to the life of the tragedian in the *Nicomachean Ethics* 3, in which Aristotle reports a notorious event in the life of Aeschylus that I consider by far the most important. In this section, Aristotle embarks on a complex analysis of voluntary and involuntary actions,<sup>68</sup> concentrating in particular on errors caused by misjudging an action (*EN* 3.1109b30–1111b29), a subject of importance also in Aristotle's analysis of tragedy (e.g., in his discussion of *hamartia*, *Po.* 1453a8–12). The overall

64 Generally, for the scarcity of the citations from Aeschylus outside the *Poetics*, see again Halliwell 1986, 95 n. 20; particularly for the *Rhetoric*, see Hanink 2014, 204–7.

65 Sommerstein 2008, 296 lists this among unattributed fragments.

66 Regarding the basic meanings of *phthonos* in Aristotle's *Rh.* and the claim that this emotion is felt among people with similar status in Greek culture, see Sanders 2014, 74–5.

67 Lloyd-Jones 1996, 292 notes that, despite the Aristotelian attribution (cf. Pliny *NH* 10.86), there is no additional evidence that Aeschylus composed on the subject and the style and diction of the fragment seem rather Sophoclean; Hahnemann 2012, 172–3, with a review of earlier bibliography, discusses the fragment as well as its common modern assumption that it should belong to Sophocles' *Tereus* and that Aristotle misattributes it; she suggests, however, another possibility, namely that the author of the fragment may be Philocles, Aeschylus' nephew, who is also known to have composed a play with the same title.

68 Sorabji 1980, 243–56 provides a concise and useful review of the Aristotelian corpus on "nescience" and the complicated relationship between determinism and involuntariness.

idea is that people cannot be ignorant of everything (i.e. their own identity, actions, tools, and results of their actions), unless they are insane. Nevertheless, sometimes a person can be unaware of his actions. Thus, people say that something “slipped out of their mouths,” or that they did not know that something was secret, as Aeschylus said about the mysteries (*EN* 1111a7–11). This was Aeschylus’ excuse in response to the accusation before the Areopagus that he had divulged the Eleusian Mysteries in his tragedies.<sup>69</sup> This example from Aeschylus’ biography is coupled with illustrations from myths—most of them frequently used in tragedies—, which may rightly look bizarre to us.<sup>70</sup> So, for example, one might believe that his son was the enemy, as Merope did,<sup>71</sup> or give someone a drink in order to save one’s life, but end up killing him (*EN* 3.1111a3–4; 7).<sup>72</sup> The point being that such things could occur in a person’s life, as they happen in (tragic) myth.<sup>73</sup> However, this strange juxtaposition of a real incident and other examples that have equivalents in tragic drama could give us an idea about an ethical domain where tragedies offer important scenarios to observe,<sup>74</sup> in the philosopher’s view: the gray area between guilt and personal responsibility. This link is remarkable, considering Aristotle’s well-known reserve with respect to outlining the moral implications of tragedy in the *Poetics*.

69 Gagné 2009, 220–1 provides a detailed discussion of the incident, including other ancient testimonies.

70 As Hanink 2014, 195 writes on this: “little practical difference separates his [Aristotle’s] didactical use of an episode from the myth of Merope or from the (life-) story of Aeschylus.”

71 Because Aristotle clearly names Merope here, commentators (for example, Irwin 1999, 204 n. 17; Reeve 2014, 242 n. 210) have suggested that he may have Euripides’ *Chresphontes* in mind, which he also discusses in *Po.* 14.1454a5–7. However, commentators rarely discuss how other examples can also evoke tragic plots in this section of the *EN*, as Aristotle does not draw a direct comparison.

72 Aristotle distinguishes between people acting in ignorance (not knowing the universals) as opposed to because of ignorance (not knowing the particulars), the latter only being pardonable (*EN* 3.1110b28–33); Meyer 2011, 170–89 and Destrée 2011, 294–6 examine further implications of ignorance and character responsibility.

73 This strange situation can certainly call to mind Euripides’ *Peleiades*, the daughters of Peleus thinking that they would rejuvenate their father, in fact, kill him by following Medea’s suggestions; cf. a little earlier Aristotle rejects Euripides’ Alcmaeon’s claim of innocence coming from ignorance (*EN* 3.1110a26–9).

74 Cf. *EN* 5.1135a24–30: “It is possible for the person hit to be your father but that you know only that he is a man or one of the company and not that he is your father”. This is another allusion to tragic myth without naming “tragedies” *per se*, surely evoking the story of Oedipus. This exemplifies ignorance of the particulars.

## Conclusions

Because of the scarcity of citations and references to Aeschylus, it has been sometimes assumed that Aristotle disliked the tragedian and his works. Aristotle's reservation in referring to Aeschylean plays appears to derive from his idiosyncratic theoretical interests. Nevertheless, apart from the *Poetics* 4, which sketches the role of the dramatist in the development of the genre, Aristotle is not concerned with any individual appraisal of the playwright in the treatise. His habit of citing without naming the author as well as textual corruptions often may lead scholars to different interpretations of the passages in which Aeschylus' tragedies are mentioned, or may be brought up as examples. However, in the vast majority of cases in the *Poetics*, Aristotle does not pass judgment on the plays or dramatists but on particular dramatic devices. Sometimes Aristotle surprisingly admires Aeschylean scenes that we may think he should not, such as the recognition scene in the *Libation Bearers*, whose logic seems to be questioned already in Euripides' *Electra*. Other times we may assume that Aristotle implies harsh criticism of Aeschylean drama, as in the case of reading "*opsis*" and the plays in Hades in the fourth species of tragedy, when, in fact, the text of the *Poetics* is too damaged to permit full speculation and no play is clearly named or critiqued *per se*. Ultimately, exploring Aristotle's reception of Aeschylus, though an enterprise of limited scope as it may seem, leads to a better understanding of the philosopher's methods and preferences, as well as brings an awareness of our limitations in judging his treatises.

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# Aeschylus in the Hellenistic Period

Sebastiana Nervegna

## Introduction

The first to bring tragedy into the world, Aeschylus is lofty, dignified and grandiloquent often even to a fault, but rough and unpolished in many things. For this reason, the Athenians allowed later poets to enter revised versions of his plays in the competitions; in this way, many won the first prize. But Sophocles and Euripides brought tragedy to much greater heights. Their styles are different, and very many debate which of the two is the best poet. Since this question has nothing to do with the subject that I am discussing, I will not express my opinion. But everyone must acknowledge that Euripides will be much more helpful to those who train themselves to plead in court.

QUINT. *INST.* 10.1.66–7

With these words, Quintilian quickly reviews Greek tragedy, names its three main champions and comments on how their plays can benefit the ideal reader of his *Education of the Orator*, the budding speaker that is to rule over the state.<sup>1</sup> Quintilian wrote and probably published his work before the death of the Emperor Domitian in 96 CE, but he does provide an excellent starting point into the reception of Aeschylus and his tragedies during the Hellenistic period. In assessing Greek literature and selecting Greek texts for his trainee, Quintilian draws from works by scholars active in the Library of Alexandria, especially Aristophanes of Byzantium and Aristarchus of Samothrace, whom he calls “judges of the poets” (*Inst.* 10.1.64). The Alexandrian scholars both collected and selected Greek texts, drawing the lists of authors familiar to later writers: Quintilian is aware that Aristarchus selected Greek iambic poets, for instance, and that both Aristarchus and Aristophanes of Byzantium excluded contemporary writers from their lists.<sup>2</sup> Hellenistic scholarship looms large in the *Education of the Orator* as in many other rhetorical works from

1 See Morgan 1998, 226–34 on Quintilian's orator.

2 Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.54, 59. For Quintilian's use of Hellenistic sources in his poetry section, see Steinmetz 1964 and Rutherford 1998, 41.

antiquity. Quintilian concisely brings to the fore the two key trends characterizing Aeschylus' afterlife from the Classical through to the Hellenistic period and beyond: Aeschylus' reputation in the history of Greek tragedy and his little popularity with later generations. Quintilian opens his survey of Greek tragedy by stating Aeschylus' founding role in the history of the genre: Aeschylus "first brought tragedy into the world." Although Aeschylus belongs to the second generation of Greek tragedians, for Quintilian as for a host of ancient authors he is the father of Greek tragic theatre. Throughout antiquity, however, Aeschylus enjoyed little favour in comparison with his younger colleagues, Sophocles and, above all, Euripides. Quintilian makes clear that, despite Aeschylus' reputation as the first tragedian, Sophocles and Euripides contended for the title of the best tragedian. Quintilian is interested in Greek dramas as texts for rhetorical training, but in public theatres too Aeschylus' plays did not circulate widely. Both scholarly and theatrical activities show little interest in the earliest canonical tragedian. This chapter reconstructs these two parallel strands in Aeschylus' ancient afterlife—his reputation in the history of Greek tragedy and the little circulation of his plays among later generations—by drawing upon a variety of sources: literary records, the iconographic material related to Aeschylus' plays, and the papyri preserving their texts. They both confirm the two points noted by Quintilian and provide specific information on what scholars, readers, and audiences knew about Aeschylus and his works across the ancient world, from the late fourth through to the first century BCE.

### Aeschylus and the Birth of Greek Tragedy

In the second half of the fourth century BCE, Aristotle wrote and theorized about Greek tragedy in his *Poetics*, a work that was to exert a long-lasting influence on the study and interpretation of poetry. Setting his discussion within a naturalistic framework, Aristotle applies to the history of Greek tragedy, and poetry in general, the language of nature: he regards tragedy as developing over time, going through various stages of changes to "acquire its own nature," and finally reaching its maturity. Aristotle's discussion presupposes that the genre has reached its full development; indeed, it aims at determining the features necessary to successful poetic compositions.<sup>3</sup> Although he was

3 Select key passages: Ar. *Po.* 1449a.14–6; 23–4; 1451a.9–11; see also 1447a.1–3 on Aristotle's stated aim. See further Halliwell 1998, esp. 92–6 and Munteanu, this volume. Most 2000 provides a wide-ranging discussion of the theorization of tragedy and the idea of the tragic in antiquity and beyond.

the first to gather and organize the records of the Athenian festivals, in the *Poetics* Aristotle shows little interest in the origins of tragedy and mentions them only briefly, connecting them with improvisation.<sup>4</sup> He does not name any of the earliest tragedians: Thespis, Choerilus, or Phrynichus. For us, both Thespis and Choerilus are only shadowy, semi-legendary figures;<sup>5</sup> Phrynichus, by contrast, is the earliest playwright to come into sharper relief. He stands out as a talented musician, a daring choreographer, and a provocative poet, or at least this is how he was remembered in the late fifth century BCE.<sup>6</sup> Among other things, he turned history into tragedy by staging *Capture of Miletus*, a play that made him infamous and reportedly earned him a fine for crossing the line between fictional and real emotions.<sup>7</sup> He also authored the earliest tragedy that we can somehow reconstruct, *Phoenician Women*, probably staged in 476 with Themistocles as the *choregos*.<sup>8</sup> Phrynichus' death in Sicily suggests that he joined Bacchylides, Pindar, Simonides and all the other poets crowding Hieron's court in Syracuse.<sup>9</sup> Evidently, his talent had won him renown in Sicily, where he first exported the fledgling product of Attic tragedy and set the example for his much more illustrious colleague: Aeschylus.

Aeschylus visited Sicily at least twice. He performed there his *Persians*, staged also at the Great Dionysia in Athens in 472 BCE, and, at Hieron's invitation, he also produced a new play, the *Aetnaeae*, to commemorate the founding of the city of Aetna.<sup>10</sup> According to the biographic tradition, Aeschylus died in Gela,

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- 4 Ar. *Po.* 1449a. According to Diogenes Laertius 5.26, Aristotle wrote three works on the history of Greek drama: *Victories at the Dionysia*, *On Tragedies* and *Didascaliae*.
  - 5 The testimonia and fragments of both poets are collected in 1 Thespis *TrGF* T1–23, F 1–5; 2 Choerilus *TrGF* T1–10; F1–5. Todisco's (2003) identification of a number of vases as illustrating the tragedies by Thespis and his contemporaries is debatable at best.
  - 6 Aristophanes' comedy is the best source for Phrynichus' reception in the fifth century: Aristophanes refers to Phrynichus in several plays, from *Wasps* (422) to *Birds* (414), *Thesmophoriazusae* (411) and *Frogs* (405). See 3 Phrynichus *TrGF* T 10a–g with the scholia to Aristophanes' passages; further discussion in Nervegna 2014, 169–70.
  - 7 Hdt. 6.21.2. Phrynichus' tragedy is traditionally dated to the aftermath of the sack of Miletus, in 494, but a later date in the aftermath of the Persian sack of Athens in 479 can not be excluded. See Badian 1996.
  - 8 Plut. *Them.* 5.4; 3 Phrynichus *TrGF* T 4 (without mention of the play-title).
  - 9 *Prolegomena* III, p. 9 K.; 3 Phrynichus *TrGF* T 6 with Nervegna 2013, 19 with n. 31.
  - 10 The *Life of Aeschylus* records a reperformance of Aeschylus' *Persians* in Sicily, while Eratosthenes simply mentions a performance (Aesch. *TrGF* T 1.68–g; 56a). See further Bosher 2012 (who re-considers the possibility that *Persians* was first staged in Syracuse) and Smith, this volume; Poli Palladini 2001 (reconstruction of Aeschylus' *Aetnaeae*, which she renders as *Nymphs of Mount Aetna*) and 2013, esp 17–8 (Aeschylus' journeys to Sicily).

where he was honoured with a tomb located in the public burial grounds and marked by the famous epitaph celebrating Aeschylus for fighting against the Persians at Marathon. Apparently, shortly after his death, Aeschylus' tomb became a pilgrimage site: "those who made their livelihood in tragedy made frequent trips to the memorial, where they made offerings and staged dramas" (or perhaps, more precisely, "his dramas"). The *Life of Aeschylus* clearly indicates that Aeschylus was given a hero-cult in Gela.<sup>11</sup> The earliest sign of the process that turned Aeschylus into a cultural icon—his canonization, we may say—come from the Greek West. There is no record that the Athenians ever attempted to reclaim Aeschylus' body as they did with Euripides' body, for instance, by negotiating, unsuccessfully, with the Macedonian court.<sup>12</sup> But Athens did follow suit with the Geloans in honoring Aeschylus. After Aeschylus' death, the Athenian assembly passed the decree mentioned by the *Life of Aeschylus*, Quintilian, and other sources: later poets were allowed to restage Aeschylus' tragedies within the dramatic competition, exciting late fifth-century spectators like Aristophanes' Dicaeopolis.<sup>13</sup>

Aeschylus' reception in the Athens of his day defies detailed reconstruction, but time and again the sources that purportedly refer to Aeschylus' lifetime paint him as an important tragedian whose works were bound to survive. Aeschylus' own claims, or rather the claims ascribed to him, are a good starting point. He was said to have been initiated by the god of the theatre: Dionysus approached him when he was a small boy guarding the grapes, bade him to write tragedies and, right at daybreak, he took up the art, finding it quite easy. He apparently had no doubt about his talent: "once, unjustly defeated on the stage, [Aeschylus] said that he dedicated his tragedies to Time, knowing that it would bring him the honour he deserved." Aeschylus' notorious statement that "his plays were crumbs from Homer's big banquets" also smacks of self-glorification.<sup>14</sup> Regardless of the thematic links between Aeschylus' drama and Homer's *epos*, Aeschylus associated himself with Homer, the legendary father of Greek poetry and culture. It remains unclear if, as often for fifth-century

11 *Life of Aeschylus* 11 with Wilson 2007, 356. See also Poli Palladini 2013, ch. 10.

12 Gell. *NA* 15. 20.9 is the *locus classicus*. On the Macedonians' appropriation of Euripides, see further Hanink 2010, esp. 55.

13 *Life of Aeschylus* 12, *Ar. Ach.* 13–5. Biles 2006/2007 critically reviews the sources for the decree in honor of Aeschylus, but see also Biles 2011, 58–61, allowing for reperformances at the Rural Dionysia.

14 Paus. 1. 21. 1; Athen. 8. 347e–d (Aesch. *TrGFT* 111, 113a, 112a). Note also the various reports on Aeschylus writing his plays when drunk (Aesch. *TrGFT* 117a–g).

tragedians, these anecdotes have their roots in fifth-century comedy, but they do chime with the comic portrayal of Aeschylus.<sup>15</sup>

On the comic stage, Aeschylus comes across both assertive and self-confident. His role as the pioneer of Greek tragedy was immortalized by the one play that looms most largely on all subsequent discussions of Greek tragedy, Aristophanes' *Frogs*. When Dionysus reaches the Underworld, he finds Aeschylus enjoying the privileges reserved for the "best among his colleagues": free meals in the Prytaneum and a throne next to Pluto, the "Chair of Tragedy" that the newly arrived Euripides now claims for himself (*Frogs* 761–78). The *agon* between Aeschylus and Euripides plays itself on several levels: stylistically, morally and politically. The demagogic Euripides wields the weapons of minute and precise words; Aeschylus unleashes the raw power of tragedy, ranting and shouting even before he appears on stage (768). Aeschylus can be described only with a series of metaphors from the animal and natural worlds. He is a bull and a boar: his eyes are whirling with fury, his neck bristles stand upright and he roars (804, 814–23). He is also a force of nature: a gale tearing off ship-timber, a hurricane about to burst, and an oak-tree set on fire (824–5, 848, 859). All these images, along with epic epithets such as "mighty-thunderer" and "with flashing helmet," "prepare us for a mightily heroic figure of superhuman size and scale."<sup>16</sup> The origin of his poetry, which is presented as entirely concerned with gods and demigods (1058–60), are higher than the human. This explains why Aristophanes' Aeschylus places himself in the tradition of figures who used poetry to transmit knowledge of key social and civic institutions: Orpheus, Musaeus, Hesiod, and, once again, Homer (1030–5). Aristophanes' chorus of initiates pays respect to Aeschylus by addressing him as "the first of the Greeks to build towers of grandiose words (πυργώσας ῥήματα σεμνά) and to adorn tragic talk"—two lines that later authors will quickly appropriate.

Aristophanes has Aeschylus promote his achievements not only in *Frogs*, but also elsewhere. In a fragment from an unidentified comedy, Aeschylus boasts about his choreographic talent: "I myself used to create the dances for my choruses," Aeschylus claims; "I know that," a character answers, "by watching the *Phrygians*. When they came to help Priam get his dead son back, they moved like this and that and in this way as they danced." Aeschylus' interlocutor is familiar with a theatrical performance, or reperformance, of

15 See in general Lefkowitz 2012 and Rosenbloom, this volume.

16 Ar. *Ran.* 814, 818 with Griffith 2013, 121. See also O'Sullivan 1992, 111–26.

Aeschylus' *Phrygians* and imitates on the stage the dance-steps of Aeschylus' chorus.<sup>17</sup>

Not that Aristophanes was the first or the only comic poet to paint Aeschylus as the patriarch of tragedy; rather, he relied on shared comic material. A line from Pherecrates' *Small Change* reads: "I built and perfected a great craft and I gave it to them" (ὅστις <γ> αὐτοῖς παρέδωκα τέχνην μεγάλην ἐξοικοδομήσας, *PCG* F 100). The speaker is Aeschylus and the setting of the play is Hades. Since the meter of this line, anapestic tetrameter, suggests an *agon* scene, Aeschylus was a major character in the play. That Pherecrates' *Small Change* predates Aristophanes' *Frogs* is suggested by Pherecrates' biographic details and made clear by the use of this line in the *parabasis* of Aristophanes' *Peace*: "he created a lofty art for us and set in place the stones for a towering craft" (ἐπόησε τέχνην μεγάλην ἡμῖν κάπύργωσ' οἰκοδομήσας, 749). The chorus of *Peace* presents Aristophanes as the Aeschylus of comedy specifically to celebrate Aristophanes as the poet who turned comedy from unsophisticated and amateurish into a worthy cause. Cratinus, who was active from the 450s until, most probably, the late 420s, also made a similar claim: by associating Aristophanes with Euripides, Cratinus styled himself as an inspired poet and aligned himself with Aeschylus.<sup>18</sup> This is all precious evidence for Aeschylus' reputation in the second half of the fifth century BCE.

Aeschylus' standing as the father of Greek tragedy remained unshaken throughout antiquity. Under the stewardship of Lycurgus, fourth-century Athens took two key steps in preserving Classical tragedy and celebrating its main authors: the texts of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides were placed in the public archive and their portrait statues were erected in the Theatre of Dionysus.<sup>19</sup> Set in the prestigious Eastern *parodos* of the newly refurbished theatre, this statuary complex went by the name of "those around Aeschylus" (Athen. 1.19e; Diog. Laert. 2.43). Aeschylus was evidently the key figure of the trio. Ancient authors continued both to note Aeschylus' groundbreaking role in the history of Greek tragedy and to comment on his many innovations, be they real or presumed. Aristotle records that, by comparison with his predecessors, Aeschylus "diminished the part of the chorus and made speech the protagonist." Chamaeleon credits him with being the first to arrange dance

17 Ar. *PCG* F 696. Also relevant is another fragment by Aristophanes, *PCG* F 720 "there is darkness now that Aeschylus has died (σκότος γάρ ἐστὶν Αἰσχύλου τεθνηκότος)."

18 Quaglia 2005 (Pherecrates' biographic details: Pherecrates was first successful in 437 and was still alive in 411); Biles 2011, 5–6 (Aristophanes as Aeschylus); Cratinus *PCG* F 342 with Bakola 2010, 24–9 (Cratinus as Aeschylus). See further, Rosenbloom, this volume.

19 Ps.-Plut. *Mor.* 841f. For the reception of fifth-century tragedy and tragedians in Lycurgan Athens, see now Hanink 2014.

steps without using trainers. Evidently based on the comic fragment that Chamaeleon cites, this statement is misleading—Phrynichus, for one, must have also trained his own choruses—but it does contribute to the portrayal of Aeschylus as an innovator.<sup>20</sup> Like many things related to the history of Greek theatre, the introduction of the second and third actor was a matter of controversy. According to Aristotle, Aeschylus invented the second actor and Sophocles the third. The fourth-century scholar Dicaearchus, too, maintained that Sophocles introduced the third actor, but the *Life of Aeschylus* explicitly contradicts him and ascribes this innovation to Aeschylus.<sup>21</sup>

The *Life of Aeschylus*, which apparently draws from a work by some Alexandrian scholar, finds much to praise about Aeschylus.<sup>22</sup> After relating a few biographic details, it presents him as “far surpass[ing] his predecessors” in all aspects of tragedy-making, from poetry to staging and costumes, and corroborates these claims by quoting the choral lines from Aristophanes’ *Frogs*.<sup>23</sup> The author of the *Life of Aeschylus* goes back to this point in the last section of the work, giving more details: “Aeschylus was the first to enlarge tragedy with passions of a more exalted kind,” dazzling his audiences with many stage effects, from decorated scenery to machinery, altars, tombs, ghosts, and Furies (14–6). Aeschylus reportedly made tragedy “big” but did not make it perfect. The author of the *Life of Aeschylus* endorses the tradition whereby Sophocles perfected tragedy, but he is keen on adding that Sophocles’ greatness, too, is a by-product of Aeschylus’ talent: “it was much more difficult to advance tragedy to such greatness after Thespis, Phrynichus, and Choerilus, than to arrive at Sophocles’ perfection for one who wrote after Aeschylus.”

The *Life of Aeschylus* clearly acknowledges its debts to the portrayal of Aeschylus in Aristophanes’ *Frogs*. The same text, and in one case the same lines, also lies behind two Hellenistic epigrams on Aeschylus included in the *Palatine Anthology*, one by Antipater of Thessalonica and one by Dioscorides.<sup>24</sup> Aristophanes describes Aeschylus as “build[ing] towers of grandiose words,” contrasting him with Euripides and his ability to produce “slivers of linchpins and parings of works of art” (σκινδαλάμων τε παραξόνια σμιλεύματά τ’ ἔργων).<sup>25</sup> Antipater celebrates the grandeur of Aeschylus’ language by using

20 Chamaeleon fr. 41 W; Aesch. *TrGFT* 103.

21 Arist. *Po.* 1449a.15–8, *Life of Aeschylus* 15, citing Dicaearchus fr. 76 W. But see also Munteanu, this volume.

22 Podlecki 1966, 1–3.

23 *Life of Aeschylus* 2, quoting Ar. *Frogs* 1004–5 (cited above).

24 *AP* 7.391, 411; Antipater of Thessalonica XIII and Dioscorides XXI in the editions by Gow and Page 1968 and 1965.

25 *Frogs* 819, as edited and translated by Dover 1993.

Aristophanes' image of Aeschylus as an architect: Aeschylus is the one "who built the tower (πυργώσας) of tragic speech and its proud poetry, the first in robust eloquence" (1–2). By contrast, Dioscorides recalls Aristophanes' image of Euripides as a carver by applying it to Aeschylus, who "carved letters not finely chiseled (ὁ μὴ σμιλευτὰ χαράξας γράμματα) but as if worn away by a torrent." Like the anonymous biographer, Dioscorides was familiar with the evolutionary theory of tragedy. He opens his epigram by presenting Thespis as the inventor of tragedy, celebrates Aeschylus' improvement upon the genre—"he elevated to a more refined level (ἐξύψωσεν) the jests in the rustic woodland and the revels still inchoate"—and elsewhere praises Sophocles' urbanity.<sup>26</sup> In Dioscorides' epigram as elsewhere, Aeschylus is given two distinctive features: paradoxically, he is both groundbreaking and archaic.

### Studying and Reading Aeschylus' Plays in the Hellenistic Period

Around the mid-third century BCE, Lycurgus' edition of Greek tragedy reportedly arrived in the Library of Alexandria (Galen, *Commentary of the Epidemics of Hippocrates* 2.4), where various generations of scholars edited their texts, wrote commentaries on select tragedies, and set out to write the history of the whole genre. They were the direct heirs of the earliest scholars who wrote on Greek tragedy and tragedians, the critics who gravitated around Aristotle and his school, the Peripatos. The Peripatetics authored several works focused on both tragedy as a genre—Aristoxenus' *On Tragic Dancing* and Duris of Samos' *On Tragedy*, for instance—and specific tragedians. Heraclides of Pontus inaugurated the scholarship on the tragic canon with his *On the Three Tragic Poets*: regardless of the specific details of this work, we know it dealt with Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Other works were more selective in their subject-matter: *On Passages in Sophocles and Euripides* by Heraclides of Pontus, *On Sophocles and Euripides* by Duris of Samos, and *Hypotheses of the Myths of Euripides and Sophocles* by Dicaearchus. Quintilian mentions that "very many" took part in the debate over Euripides' or Sophocles' primacy in tragedy and the earliest signs of this controversy go back to the Peripatetic circle. Aristotle defined Euripides as "the most tragic poet," but Lynceus of Samos thought

26 I am here following the text given by Galán Vioque 2001, which reads ἀτελειότερους rather than τελειότερους at l. 2 (see further Galán Vioque 2001, 275). Dioscorides celebrates Sophocles in *AP* 7.37 and treats Thespis also in a separate epigram, *AP* 7.410. On the theatre and the Hellenistic epigram, see further Fantuzzi 2007.



otherwise. Probably taking issue with Aristotle, Lynceus claimed that, “in regard to tragic sufferings, Euripides is in no way superior to Sophocles.”<sup>27</sup>

Starting with Aristotle, who nearly ignores Aeschylus, Peripatetic scholarship in general seems to have served Aeschylus rather poorly.<sup>28</sup> The notable exception is the monograph *On Aeschylus* by Chamaeleon, who had a specific interest in the early history of Greek theatre and drama.<sup>29</sup> Chamaeleon, however, does not seem to have been the first to work specifically on Aeschylus. The author of the hypothesis to Aeschylus’ *Persians* relates that, “in his work *On Aeschylus’ Myths*, Glaucus says that the *Persians* was fashioned after Phrynichus’ *Phoenician Women*,” and goes on to give a few details on both plays. This snippet of information sheds light on several issues: Aeschylus’ debt to Phrynichus’ *Phoenician Women*, which the *Persians* deliberately imitated, the participation of both authors in the celebration culture that fired Athens in the aftermath of the Persian Wars, and the earliest strand of scholarly literature on Aeschylus.<sup>30</sup> The Glaucus mentioned here is traditionally identified with the scholar Glaucus of Rhegium, a contemporary of Democritus and the earliest literary historian of Greece on record.<sup>31</sup> Note Glaucus’ hometown, Rhegium, in South Italy. His literary activities on Aeschylus are yet another clue to the importance of the Greek West in Aeschylus’ ancient afterlife.

In their limited interest in Aeschylus, the scholars active in the Library of Alexandria followed suit with their predecessors in fourth-century Athens. Records on Alexandrian scholarship on Greek tragedy are admittedly scant and not as specific as one would wish, but a few key points can be established. Around 285–283 BCE, Ptolemy II charged specific scholars with ceating the ‘edition’ of select texts: tragedy, comedy, and Homer.<sup>32</sup> Tragedy fell under the competence of Alexander of Aetolia, a practicing tragedian active in two

27 Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.67 (fully cited above); Arist. *Po.* 1453a27–30; Athen. 14.652c–d.

28 References and discussion in Halliwell 1998: 95 n. 20, who also notes Aeschylus’ slight presence in Aristotle’s works in general. For possible reasons, see Munteanu, this volume.

29 Chamaeleon also authored a work called *On Thespis*. See further Podlecki 1969, 122–4.

30 See further Dué 2006, 58–60 (Aeschylus’ *Persians* and Phrynichus’ *Phoenician Women*); Taplin 2006 (tragedy and the celebration culture of the 470s); Montanari 2009 (ancient scholarship on Aeschylus).

31 Montanari 2009, 396–7 challenges this view, arguing that the Glaucus mentioned here is to be identified with Glaucus of Samos, who is variously considered a grammarian active in Alexandria or a Peripatetic author of the fourth or third century BCE. Huxley 1968 reconstructs the literary activities of Glaucus of Rhegium.

32 So, for instance, Tzetzes *Prooim.* 11 init. (XIaII K), although it remains unclear if a textual edition was actually involved. See most recently Lowe 2013, 350 and Simelidis, this volume.

courts, in both Egypt and Macedon. By the time Alexander left Alexandria for Pella around 277, the texts of the canonical tragedians were ready for detailed study by other Alexandrian scholars, in particular Aristophanes of Byzantium and Aristarchus of Samothrace. Aristophanes of Byzantium, who is often mentioned in the scholia to Euripides' and Sophocles' tragedies, is never cited in the scholia to Aeschylus' drama but he is credited with the hypotheses to five of Aeschylus' preserved tragedies, including the probably non-authentic *Prometheus Bound*. Even if the linguistic and factual oddities of these summaries make them unlikely to be authentic, later scholars and readers evidently associated Aristophanes of Byzantium with scholarship on Aeschylus.<sup>33</sup> As far as we know, the first and only attested commentary on Aeschylus' drama goes to the credit of Aristarchus, who worked on the satyr play *Lycurgus*, or perhaps the original tetralogy, the *Lycurgeia*.<sup>34</sup>

More records can be drawn into the picture of Hellenistic scholarship on Aeschylus. First, the scholia to Aeschylus' plays were variously augmented over time, but their earliest layers go back to the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Although the scholia do not name any major Alexandrian scholar, they contain at least some material certainly Alexandrian. Their original source is unknown, but they arguably derive from a commentary by Didymus, who is otherwise named in connection with Aeschylus.<sup>35</sup> Second, we have a few Aeschylus-papyri preserving hypotheses and scholia to several plays now lost: *Women of Aetna*, *Glaucus the Sea-God*, perhaps *Philoctetes*, *Myrmidones* and *Wool-Carders*.<sup>36</sup> These papyri are dated to the Roman period, but they show both that Hellenistic readers were somehow familiar with these plays and that Hellenistic scholars devoted some attention to them. The notes recording the many changes of scene in the *Women of Aetna* and the date of the *Suppliants*, for instance, could go back to a scholar such as Aristophanes of Byzantium.<sup>37</sup> While showing that Aeschylus' plays, which are linguistically difficult and metrically sophisticated, appealed to a learned audience, these papyri also indirectly confirm Aeschylus' limited presence in school-related records. Only

33 Brown 1984, 270–1 and 1987.

34 Schol. Theocr. 10.18e; see Aesch. *TrGF Lycurgus* F 124–5 with Radt's note. On Aristarchus' work on Aeschylus see further Montanari 2009, 416–7.

35 Dickey 2007, 36 (Hellenistic material in the scholia to Aeschylus' tragedies); Montanari 2009, 418–20 (Didymus and Aeschylus).

36 These papyri are conveniently gathered and discussed in Bastianini et al. 2004, 13–73.

37 POxy XX 2257; POxy XX 2256, fr. 3; see also PHerc 1012, col. xxii, a metrical treatise that names both Aristophanes of Byzantium and Aeschylus (Bastianini et al. 2004 nos. 1, 3, 7).

two of these records preserve lines by Aeschylus.<sup>38</sup> Papyri in general, which are first-hand evidence for the circulation of dramatic texts, provide ample evidence for both the wide popularity of Euripides' plays and the slight favour of Aeschylus' drama: 171 papyri can be more or less securely ascribed to Euripides and only 33 to Aeschylus (and 36 to Sophocles).<sup>39</sup> That Aeschylus is little represented on both school-related records and papyri in general is not a coincidence. Since school practices influenced and shaped the taste of the larger reading public, the same authors and texts are to be found in and out of schools.<sup>40</sup>

### Watching Aeschylus' Plays in the Hellenistic Period

Fifth-century Greek tragedy enjoyed a warm reception in the theatres scattered around the Mediterranean, from the Classical well into the Roman period. Ancient scholars were not the only ones to select Greek plays by editing their texts and writing commentaries on them; actors started this process before scholars, by forming a repertoire that they presented in various venues. A wealth of sources helps us sketch the vibrant reperformance tradition of Classical tragedy during the Hellenistic period: literary records, festival-related inscriptions, the iconographic and archaeological material from Attica and South Italy, and the adaptations of Greek plays into Latin for performance in Rome. Although scattered and often fraught with interpretative problems, these records outline a generally clear trend: on public stages, too, Aeschylus did not fare as well as Euripides. Aeschylus is variously credited with a minimum of seventy dramas (excluding satyr plays) to a maximum of ninety.<sup>41</sup> Only about six of his tragedies, mostly related to the latest phase of Aeschylus' career, can be traced in the activities of later actors: *Libation Bearers*, *Eumenides*, *Edonians*, *Europa* or *Carians*, *Niobe* and *Phrygians* or *Ransom of Hector*.<sup>42</sup> If we

38 By contrast, there are twenty school-records preserving Euripides' lines. See Criboire 1996, with the convenient list given in Criboire 1997. Note also an additional record, an ostrakon preserving a line recalling either an expression by Aeschylus or by Euripides (O. Claud. I 188; Criboire 1996, no. 277).

39 The figures are drawn from the catalogue of Greek literary papyri by Mertens-Pack<sup>3</sup>, available online at <http://web.philo.ulg.ac.be/cedopal/>. Morgan 2003 analyses the distribution of tragic papyri over time, identifying patterns of reading across Egypt.

40 See Criboire's (2001) discussion on the favor that Euripides' *Phoenician Women* enjoyed both in schools and among the cultivated public.

41 See Podlecki 2009, 319–20 for a recent review of the sources.

42 References and further discussion in Nervegna 2014; see also Taplin 2007, 48–87.

had to guess which Aeschylean play an Hellenistic spectator was most likely to watch on contemporary stages, two tragedies would come up as the best candidates: *Eumenides* and *Edonians*.

*Eumenides* is the last tragedy in the trilogy of the *Oresteia*, which Aeschylus successfully staged at the Great Dionysia at Athens in 458 BCE. That Orestes went to the shrine of Apollo in Delphi to purify himself after killing his mother is, as far as we know, an Aeschylean invention, a detail that Aeschylus himself introduced into the story of Orestes.<sup>43</sup> Many painters continued to depict the suppliant Orestes at Delphi, always surrounded by Aeschylus' most spectacular and original chorus, the Furies. In mainland Greece, this scene entered the visual record after the premiere of *Eumenides* to survive well into the following century. A fourth-century BCE Attic pelike now in Perugia clearly reproduces this episode: Orestes is at the *omphalos*, flanked by two Erinyes dressed in long *peploi* and carrying torches.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps a few decades after this pelike was painted, Timocles staged a comedy named *Orestautokleides* after the pederast Autokleides who passes himself off as Orestes. The two extant fragments of this play show that the Orestes in question comes straight from Aeschylus' *Eumenides*. Recalling the beginning of Aeschylus' tragedy, where the horrified Pythia describes Orestes surrounded by the Furies, Timocles presents Autokleides surrounded by sleepy old women with prostitute-like names. The number of names listed, eleven, is significant because the second fragment of *Orestautokleides* alludes to the Board of the Eleven by mentioning the law court that they used. Since the Board of the Eleven was in charge of arresting and prosecuting some types of criminals in Athens, the chorus of prostitutes apparently prosecuted Autokleides and put him on a trial, just like the Furies with Orestes. In addition to being a rare example of a fourth-century comedy toying with Aeschylus' tragedy, Timocles' *Orestautokleides* also suggests familiarity with Aeschylus' *Eumenides* as a performance script.<sup>45</sup>

*Eumenides* kept being reproduced in the theatre-related records from fourth-century South Italy. Here too, local painters depicted the play by the Delphi scene, though with some interesting variations in the rendering of the Furies, for instance, whom they made winged.<sup>46</sup> Several factors point to

43 Sommerstein 1989, 1–6; Taplin 2007, 58.

44 Perugia, Museo Etrusco-Romano, unnumbered, dated to the 370s or the 360s. See further Taplin 2007, no. 6.

45 Timocles, *PCG* F 27 (see Aesch. *Eum.* 40–7), 28. On Timocles' *Orestautokleides* and Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, see also Olson 2007, 175–6.

46 Taplin 2007, nos. 7–11; Csapo 2010, 44–5 with references. One of these vases, an Apulian bell-krater dated to around 400s, shows Orestes in Athens and is therefore not related to

the relationship of these vases with local reperformances of Greek plays: the theatrical elements such as costumes and stages included on at least some paintings, the several theatrical buildings attested in South Italy, the many actors and poets who came from this area, and the activities of Roman playwrights.<sup>47</sup> From the mid-third century BCE onwards, poets who hailed from the same areas that produced most of the theatre-related vases, Apulia and Campania, started to adapt Greek tragedies and comedies into Latin for performance in Rome. *Eumenides* is one of the Greek plays that had a new lease on life on Roman stages, via Ennius' adaptation. In Ennius' *Eumenides*, too, Orestes killed his mother to avenge his father and was put on a trial before the Areopagus council. One of the fragments reads, "I proclaim that Orestes has won. You get away from him!"<sup>48</sup> The speaker is the goddess Athena: she is pronouncing her famous verdict and finally freeing Orestes from the Furies, the formidable chorus and prosecutor that Ennius too brought onto the stage. Ennius was active one generation after the pioneers of Roman drama and produced his plays in the late third and early second century BCE, but Cicero suggests that later Republican audiences, too, were familiar with his *Eumenides*. Speaking in the Senate against Piso in 55 BCE, Cicero refers to the Furies that hound criminals with blazing torches "as you see on the stage" (*ut in scaena videtis*). He also attacks Piso by calling him "senseless, frantic, demented," and, to top the list, "madder than the Orestes or Alcmeon of tragedy."<sup>49</sup>

The same, varied range of sources related to the theatrical afterlife of *Eumenides* also characterizes the ancient reception of *Edonians*, a play that Aeschylus probably staged later in his career and that won him quite a bit of renown.<sup>50</sup> The first tragedy in the tetralogy known as *Lycurgeia*, *Edonians* dramatizes the arrival of Dionysus and his followers in Thrace, where they meet with the opposition of the local king, Lycurgus. The extant fragments yield a few details of the story. Dionysus arrives with his crowd of followers playing music and, captured by Lycurgus, is taunted on stage for his effeminate appearance. Marking his epiphany with supernatural signs, Dionysus reveals

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the Delphi scene. Berlin, SMPK Antikensammlung inv. VI 4565 (Taplin 2007, no. 11 with Taplin's comments).

47 Taplin 2007, esp. 9–10; Nervegna 2014.

48 Ennius, *Eumenides* TrRF F 53. To this play also belongs in all likelihood Ennius, *Incerta* TrRF 172, which mentions "the members of the Areopagus."

49 Cic. Pis. 46–7. Manuwald 2011, 108–19 collects and discusses many sources for repeat performances of Roman Republican tragedy, and Roman drama in general, in antiquity.

50 Demetrius Lacon, *On Poems*, p. 89 De Falco (Aesch. TrGF T 69), dates the comic poet Crates, whose *floruit* is otherwise set to 450 BCE, to "the time when Aeschylus was successful with *Edonians*." See further West 1990, 48–50.

himself, and plans his vengeance. Later accounts of this myth, traditionally thought to derive from Aeschylus' version, tell us how the god punished Lycurgus: driven mad, he mistook his son for Dionysus' vines and killed him with an axe (along with his wife, according to some versions).<sup>51</sup> Like Orestes at Delphi, the punishment of Lycurgus entered the pictorial record in both mainland Greece and South Italy. This scene is reproduced on at least eight artifacts, two later-fifth century Attic pots and six vases from the Greek West dated to around the mid-fourth century.<sup>52</sup> At least a couple of them betray the theatrical inspiration of this scene. An Apulian column-krater attributed to the Boston Painter portrays Dryas supplicating his armed father against an architectural background, a rudimentary "portico" that recalls theatrical scene painting. On another vase, an Apulian kalyx-krater decorated by the Lycurgus Painter, Lycurgus is serving a second blow to his wife while two attendants are carrying Dryas' body away (Fig. 1). One figure in the lower left corner witnessing Lycurgus' frenzied slaughter is an old man holding a staff and decked in full theatrical attire, including fancy boots. He is a *paidagogos*, a character with visible connections with tragedy in performance.<sup>53</sup> Aeschylus' *Edonians* was one of the Greek tragedies that entertained theatergoers in South Italy before the third-century playwright Naevius adapted it into Latin for Roman audiences. In his version, which went by the title of *Lycurgus*, Naevius retained several key elements of Aeschylus' play: Lycurgus manages to imprison Liber, the Roman version of Dionysus; the king and the god come to a confrontation, and Liber plans to destroy Lycurgus' palace.<sup>54</sup>

Several fragments of Naevius' *Lycurgus* are related to Dionysus' followers, the maenads. Naevius describes their attire ("in robes, gold stripes, saffron dresses, soft clothes of death"), mentions the "crested snakes" that they carry and probably qualifies their song as "mellifluous." He also presents them in the midst of an energetic dance: "forward, Bacchantes, bearing wands, in Bacchic manner and mien." An unidentified fragment by Naevius often ascribed to *Lycurgus*

51 Main fragments: Aesch. *Edonians* TrGF F 57; 61 (see also F 59 on Dionysus' attire); 58. Apollodorus 3.5.1 is the main later source for this myth; see also Hyg. *Fab.* 132.

52 LIMC, "Lykourgos I" nos. 12–4, 19–20, 26–8. There are also other fragmentary artifacts possibly related to this scene.

53 Ruvo, Museo Jatta 36955 (n.i.32); London, British Museum F271 (see Taplin 2007, nos. 12, 13). Note that the first vase has Dionysus on the back, in the company of the satyrs and a dog. Green 1999 discusses in detail the *paidagogos* figure that characterizes several theatre-related vases and its association with staged tragedy.

54 Naevius, *Lycurgus* TrRF F 37 (Liber's captivity); F 23, 33 (confrontation between Lycurgus and Liber); F 24 (Liber's vengeful plan). For reconstruction and discussion of Naevius' *Lycurgus*, see Boyle 2006, 42–9 and especially Lattanzi 1994.



FIGURE 4.1 *Calyx-krater, Apulian (Greek), Puglia, Ruvo. The old paidagogue is pictured to the far left.*

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probably describes Liber, “he had slippers on his feet, wore a saffron dress.”<sup>55</sup> Aeschylus brought onto the stage a spectacular Dionysus whose looks drew the attention of several dramatists. Well before Naevius, both Aristophanes and Eubulus toyed with Aeschylus’ Dionysus. In Aristophanes’ *Thesmophoriazusae*, first staged in 411, Euripides’ kinsman by marriage, “Inlaw,” showers the tragic poet Agathon with a series of questions that he introduces by saying, “and now, young man, I want to ask you what kind of woman you are in the manner of Aeschylus, with words from the *Lycurgeia*.” A scholiast notes that Aristophanes cites an expression from Aeschylus’ *Edonians*, “where does this sissy come from?” It is very likely that more Aeschylean borrowings hide in the following

55 Naevius, *Lycurgus* TrRF F 40, 28, 31, 32; Naevius *Incerta* TrRF F 43.

lines, which mockingly detail Agathon's props and effeminate costume: the *barbitos*, saffron-dyed dress, lyra, hairnet, oil-flask, bra, mirror and sword.<sup>56</sup>

Another scholiast has more to say about the reception of Aeschylus' *Edonians* on the comic stage. After citing one of the questions that Aristophanes puts on the mouth of Inlaw,—“what confusion of lifestyles is this?” (138)—he notes: “from here, Eubulus took the beginning of his *Dionysius*, listing the discordant objects in *Dionysius*' house, but his list is even longer.” The underlying implication is that Eubulus, who was active from ca. 380 to 335 BCE, picked up the same theme used by Aristophanes:<sup>57</sup> he, too, made parody of Aeschylus' *Edonians*. He did so in the comedy that mocked *Dionysius* I, tyrant of Syracuse and practicing tragedian. Eubulus' caricature of *Dionysius* I feeds into the tradition that the tyrant styled himself as the god *Dionysus*, but also specifically recalls Aeschylus' *Dionysus*.<sup>58</sup> In both Aristophanes' and Eubulus' comedies, the emphasis lies on how Aeschylus brought *Dionysus* onto the stage, his effeminate look, and many, disparate props. Euripides' *Bacchae* also owes a few debts to Aeschylus' *Edonians*: Pentheus' capture of *Dionysus*, for instance, and the quake that shakes the royal palace.<sup>59</sup> Euripides, Aristophanes and Eubulus, along with their audiences, were probably familiar with reperformances of Aeschylus' *Edonians*. The reperformance tradition of this and several other tragedies likely started in Classical Greece to survive well into the Hellenistic period.

## Conclusion

Canons are, by definition, the product of a selection. Time-honored and invested with cultural authority, canons are also self-referential and self-reinforcing. Although this use of the word canon entered the vocabulary of literary criticism via the literary discourse of the eighteenth century, it is no coincidence that canon stems from a Greek word. Singling out the best writers as deserving serious and prolonged attention is a practice that comes from the

56 Ar. *Thesm.* 136–45; schol. on 136 (Aesch. *Edonians* TrGF F 61). See further Austin and Olson 2004, 100, following other scholars: “the solemn introduction makes us expect a long and important parody.”

57 Eubulus *Dionysius* PCG F 24 with Austin and Olson 2004, 100–1.

58 Dio Chrys. 37, 21 notes that the statues of *Dionysius* displayed “the attributes of *Dionysus*.” Duncan 2012 offers a recent review of *Dionysius*' activity as a tragedian.

59 Eur. *Bacch.* 432–518; 585–603 (see already [Long.] *Sub.* 15.6, comparing Aesch. *Edonians* F 58 with Eur. *Bacch.* 726). Seaford 1996, 26–7 notes more parallels between the two tragedies.



Greek world.<sup>60</sup> The canon of Greek tragedy was already in place by the end of the fifth century and the honors attributed to its representatives already during their lifetime suggest that this process was underway much earlier. Classical Athens bequeathed the tragic canon to Alexandria, the new bastion of Greek culture, and Alexandrian scholars did much to preserve it. The survival of only the tragedies written by the three canonical authors or ascribed to them, for instance, is one of the by-products of canonization. Already in Classical Athens, Aeschylus' standing within the canon was, paradoxically, both fundamental and marginal. It was fundamental because of Aeschylus' real or perceived innovations in the history of tragic theatre, marginal because Aeschylus was already "archaic" by the end of the fifth century. Ancient scholars such as Quintilian kept detailing Aeschylus' ambiguous position as a canonical tragedian, and ancient audiences, too, could appreciate it. In the Hellenistic period, Aeschylus' tragedies did not survive only as texts circulating among scholars and the cultivated public. Staged by travelling troupes of actors, they continued to entertain public audiences in the theatres built around the Mediterranean. Actors show a marked preference for Aeschylus' late plays, which feature three actors, a *skene*, messenger speeches, recognition, and *agon* scenes. To public audiences, Aeschylus' plays were the earliest tragedies to include the features and motifs that became standard in later plays. In this regard too, Aeschylus was the father of Greek tragedy.

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60 Most 1990, 38. The word "canon" took up the meaning of "list of acknowledged scriptures" in the fourth century AD. Originally indicating the biblical canon, it was first applied to literary studies in general by David Ruhken in 1768. See further Hägg 2010, 110–1.

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# Aeschylus in the Roman Empire

George W. M. Harrison

## The Reputation of Aeschylus during the Roman Empire

### Assessment

There are three strands to the appreciation of Aeschylus during the Roman Empire. The first is represented by Quintilian (*Institutio Oratoris* 10.1.66) and is perhaps the most often quoted ancient appraisal of Aeschylus:<sup>1</sup>

Tragoedias primus in lucem Aeschylus protulit, sublimis<sup>2</sup> et gravis et grandilocus saepe usque ad vitium, sed rudis in plerisque et incompositus. propter quod correctas eius fabulas in certamen deferre posterioribus poetis Athenienses permisere: suntque eo modo multi coronati.

Aeschylus first brought tragedy into the light, high brow and weighty and nuanced to a fault, but lacking final polish in many instances and awkward in organization. For this reason Athenians permitted revised versions of plays for later poets to be submitted: many in this way gained their victories.

The sentiment has not lost its currency. Even Page, Oxford editor of the surviving tragedies of Aeschylus, is not any more charitable in his preface (1972, v):

Aeschyli fabulas qui recensere conatur, opus aggreditur perdifficile ne dicam paene desperandum. Notissimum illud Quintiliani iudicium laudo.

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1 All translations are those of the author. I have, on occasion, smoothed out translations when it has made the text more intelligible or better illustrates the point under discussion.

2 *Sublimis* would seem to be an approximation of ὑψηλός, which Dionysius of Halicarnassus *De Compositione Verborum* 16 uses to describe Aeschylus' style; cp. Davidson 2012. In the same passage Dionysius also attributed μεγαλοπρέπεια to Aeschylus, that is, "appropriateness (πρέπεια)" to character and situation which may be what Quintilian intends for *grandilocus*.

For the influence of Roman tragedy on re-performance of Greek tragedy, see Nervegna 2013, who discusses this passage.

Whoever attempts to edit the plays of Aeschylus finds the task extremely difficult, should I not say almost “desperate.” I applaud that most well known judgment of Quintilian.

Nor was this view of the obscurity of Aeschylus new to the Romans. *Testimonia* in Radt (*TrGF* III: Aeschylus) preserves an anecdote known from several sources but most fully preserved in Stobaeus’ (3.18.32) fifth century CE compilation of extracts citing Plutarch’s *Γυναῖκα παιδευτέον* (*Women Must be Educated*; fr. 130 Sandbach):<sup>3</sup>

Σοφοκλῆς ἐμέμφετο Αἰσχύλῳ ὅτι μεθύων ἔγραφε· ‘καὶ γὰρ εἰ τὰ δέοντα ποιεῖ,’ φησὶν, ‘ἀλλ’ οὐκ εἰδώς γε.’

Sophocles censured Aeschylus because he wrote while drinking: “For even if he does what is necessary,” he said, “he does not know.”

Plutarch voices once more what must have been his own opinion, citing Sophocles again at *Quomodo Quis Suos in Virtute Sentiat Profectus* 79B§7. Plutarch’s point is that students of philosophy progress (*profectus*) from showy bombast through to a deeper appreciation of character (*virtus*):<sup>4</sup>

ὥσπερ γὰρ ὁ Σοφοκλῆς ἔλεγε τὸν Αἰσχύλου διαπεπαιχῶς ὄγκον εἶτα τὸ πικρὸν καὶ κατὰ τεχνὸν τῆς αὐτοῦ κατασκευῆς τρίτον ἤδη τὸ τῆς λέξεως μεταβάλλειν εἰδώς, ὅπερ ἡθικώτατον ἐστὶ καὶ βέλτιστον ...

Just as Sophocles said that he changed, imitating playfully, the pretentiousness of Aeschylus, next the pedantry<sup>5</sup> and artificiality of his

3 Plutarch’s *Quaestiones Convivialium* Book 7 question 10 considers whether it is well to consult over wine. Aeschylus’ compositional methods are mentioned at 715E§2 with, one assumes, approval since the reference concludes with a quote from Plato *Timaeus* 60a: θερμαντικός τῆς ψυχῆς μετὰ τοῦ σώματος ὁ οἶνος (wine, warming of the soul along with the body).

4 On this passage, see Davidson 2012, 44 or, more fully, Pinnoy 1984, 159–64.

5 For πικρός as “pedantry” in Plutarch, see also *Quaestiones Convivales* IV Question 1. 659F. In a negative sense, ὄγκος means “pretentious” or “bombastic” in imperial Greek as in *LSJK*. Unless Plutarch is being purposely tautological, sometimes his practice (cp. Harrison 2000), it would seem preferable to assume that βέλτιστος is equivalent to *optimus*, a loaded political term during the reign of Trajan to which some of Plutarch’s writing belongs.

composition, and then thirdly the nature of his description such as the best moral character and the best men ...<sup>6</sup>

The opinions attributed to Aeschylus' younger rival are pertinent to the Roman Empire because the stories are preserved by imperial writers and are consonant with imperial perceptions, and reflect the popularity of literature posed as sympotic reflections such as in Seneca the Elder, Plutarch, Gellius, Athenaeus, and the Second Sophistic.<sup>7</sup> Here belongs also the anecdote recounted by Pausanias (1.21.2; Athens) that Aeschylus was working in a vineyard as a teenager and fell asleep, bored with his task. Dionysus visited him in a dream and instructed him to be a playwright.<sup>8</sup>

The first centuries CE were the most prolific period of theatre construction in Mediterranean antiquity<sup>9</sup> and so it is somewhat surprising that Aeschylus is absent entirely in the correspondence between Fronto and Marcus Aurelius, one of the great sponsors of theater repair and construction, but then Aeschylus is also entirely missing from Seneca's *Epistulae Morales*, *Dialogi*, *Quaestiones Naturales*, *Apocolocyntosis*, and *Epigrammata*.<sup>10</sup> By the third century CE, if Themistius is to be believed, Aeschylus had dropped out of the school curriculum.<sup>11</sup> However, any influence of Tertullian's invective against

6 If one accepts the authenticity of *PV* and its late date, it is possible that lines 816–8 shows an awareness of and respond to his critics:

... εἴ τί σοι ψελλὸν τε καὶ δυσέυρετον,  
ἐπανδίπλαζε καὶ σαφῶς ἐκμάνθανε:  
σχολή δὲ πλείων ἢ θέλω πάρεστί μοι.

"If this is obscure and difficult to you, / ask again and understand it clearly. / There is more leisure than I want." The play, however, must post-date Sophocles' remarks if, following West 1990, the *PV* is by Aeschylus' son but passed off as a work of his father. Athenaeus 8.347E repeats Aeschylus' witticism that his tragedies would prevail over time (Χρόνῳ τὰς τραγωιδίας ἀνατιθέναι).

7 The story probably originates with the Hellenistic life of Chamaeleon, as mentioned by Athenaeus 1.22C; cp. Martano, Matelli and Mirhady 2012, 272–3.

8 These two anecdotes resonate with another that Aeschylus was the first to introduce drunken men on stage. According to Athenaeus (10.428F = *TrGF* III: Aeschylus T117a Radt), source of the story, the play was the satyr drama, *Cabiri*.

9 Additionally, the third through fifth centuries saw extensive repairs and renovations indicating continued use that accords with imperial calendars; see Sear 2006 and Harrison 2015 and 2016.

10 For the poems attributed to Seneca and for the spurious correspondence between Seneca and St. Paul, see Harrison 1999.

11 *Epit.* 236C is a list of authors he read in school; cp. Raeburn and Thomas 2011, 72.

the theater in *De Spectaculis* in placing Aeschylus, or any other playwrights, on a proscribed list of authors is a dangerous assumption given the continued reconstruction and refurbishment of theatres into at least the sixth century.<sup>12</sup>

When tragic poets were compared with one another, Aeschylus mostly comes out badly.<sup>13</sup> Quintilian tempered his own judgment, continuing from the sentence quoted above, framing it in what was the objective of his work (10.1.67):

Sed longe clarius inlustraverunt hoc opus Sophocles atque Euripides, quorum in dispari dicendi via uter sit poeta melior inter plurimos quaeritur. Idque ego sane, quoniam ad praesentem materiam nihil pertinet, iniudicatum relinquo. Illud quidem nemo non fateatur necesse est, iis qui se ad agendum comparant utiliore longe fore Euripiden.

But Sophocles and Euripides illuminated this genre more brightly [than Aeschylus], whose styles, however, vary so that who [i.e., Sophocles or Euripides] is the better poet is argued among many. I, since this clearly does not touch on my present aims, I leave no opinion. No one certainly would not say that it is obvious that for those who prepare themselves for trying cases, Euripides is the more useful by far.

Aeschylus does not make the cut, and in this Quintilian is not alone; at the turn of the millennium Didymus Chalcenterus, for example, wrote a commentary on Sophocles and one on Euripides, but not on Aeschylus.<sup>14</sup>

Plutarch in *Bellone an Pace Clariores Fuerint Athenienses* 348D§5 finds it distasteful to set up dramatic and military trophies in rivalry to one another and contrast valour with stagecraft. For the latter he finds that Athens was never rid of enemies by ἡ Εὐριπίδου σοφία καὶ ἡ Σοφοκλέους λογιότης καὶ τὸ

12 The Roman phase of the theater at Aptera (Crete) is fairly typical: squatters' habitations in the orchestra and seats start only at the end of the sixth or into the seventh century CE. See Niniou-Kindeli and Chatzidakis 2016.

13 Cp., e.g., the *Life* in the Medicus Florinus Laur. 32.9 which takes it as a given that Sophocles is better. Aeschylus does not merit mention in Panoussi 2005 on Greek tragedy in the Roman Empire. One notes a fondness for quoting the contest between Aeschylus and Euripides in Aristophanes' *Frogs* 1379–1410: see, for example, Persius 1.5–8 where the image of weighing poetry pays the compliment of imitation. Persius is appropriate given the sometimes opaqueness of his dense style.

14 See Raeburn and Thomas 2011, 71. Quintilian is hardly any more sparing of other genres and writers; cp. Citroni 2006, 5–7.



Αἰσχύλου στόμα.<sup>15</sup> The conventional compliments of wisdom and eloquence for Euripides and Sophocles are intelligible; what Plutarch meant by στόμα, perhaps ‘delivery,’ remains obscure.<sup>16</sup> Lucian was less kind in his satirical obituary, *De Morte Peregrini*, in which Peregrinus (§3) is claimed to have been better than Sophocles and Aeschylus.<sup>17</sup>

Contrarily, Gellius (*Noctes Atticae* 13.19.4) notes that Euripides in his *Ino* plagiarized a line from Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Pyrphoros* (fr. 208 Sommerstein) with an unstated but clear preference for Aeschylus. At a minimum Gellius knew his Aeschylus well enough that he could comment intelligently. Photius (*Bibliotheca* 101B4) thought that Sophocles’ style was “sweet” (γλυκύς), Euripides was “terribly clever” (πάνσοφος), but Aeschylus was “super-grandiloquent” (μεγαλοφονοτατός), placing him at the front of the list.<sup>18</sup> For some writers, Aeschylus had been reduced to an anecdote or a factoid: the story of the death of Aeschylus is repeated by Valerius Maximus 7.2 and by Pliny *HN* 10.3. Pliny *HN* 37.31 cites Aeschylus from a play on Phaethon as the source of amber. Plutarch *On Exile* 604E–F§5,<sup>19</sup> Pausanias 1.14.5, and Athenaeus 14.627C–D all mention the epitaph Aeschylus composed for himself and how it showed

15 Davidson 2012, 43; he has written specifically on comparisons of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

Other passages in which Aeschylus and Sophocles are both quoted in close proximity are *Quaestiones Convivales* I.625D (question 8) on why old men read holding the text at a distance cites Aeschylus *adespota* fr. 358 Sommerstein followed by Sophocles fr. 858.

16 Babbitt’s “poetic magnificence” picks up on Quintilian’s *grandilocus* (10.1.66). I think it more likely that it refers to details of production. Scott 1984, 3, referring to Athenaeus 1.21E, notes that Aeschylus was active in all phases of his productions, which would have included choreography and projection, and acting in his own plays; cp. Gerber 1997, 39 n. 13.

17 See Jay 2014, 66.

18 See Davidson 2012, 44.

19 Plutarch *Quaestiones Convivales* 1.10.3 (628E) mentions an elegiac poem by Aeschylus on Marathon. A *lacuna*, however, interrupts the text at this point. Plutarch cites Aeschylus’ lyric (fr. 5 *PLG Bergk*) βριθὺς ὅπλιτοπάλας δάιος ἀντιπάλαις (heavily armed warrior, destructive to opponents) at *De Fortuna Romanorum* 317E§3, and *De Alexandri Magni Fortuna aut Virtute* 334D§2. In *Quaestiones Convivales* II.5.2 (640A§2), Plutarch glosses ὅπλιτοπάλας as “armor-wearing wrestler,” crediting victory at Leuctra to Boeotian military training that included wrestling; cp. Plutarch’s *synkrisis* to the *Lives* of Demosthenes-Cicero 887B§3. The anecdote is also recalled at Pausanias 1.21.1.

that the battle of Marathon was Athens' proudest moment (Radt *TrGF III*: Aeschylus T88 = *FGE* 478–479):<sup>20</sup>

ἀλκὴν δ' εὐδόκιμον Μαραθῶνιον ἄλσος ἄν εἴτοι  
καὶ βαθυχαιτήεις Μῆδος ἐπιστάμενος.

The grove of Marathon can tell of [my] glorious strength as can the long-haired Mede learning it.

Petronius' *Satyricon*, as it is now generally printed,<sup>21</sup> begins with Encolpius in mid-tirade on the tyranny of the schools of declamation. Section two names writers fortunate enough to have been born before the rise of rhetoric. His first examples are *nondum iuvenes declamationibus continebantur cum Sophocles aut Euripides invenerunt verba quibus deberent loqui* (Young men were not yet being restricted when Sophocles or Euripides made up the words through which they wanted to speak). Aeschylus is not named. In the next section the pedant and pederast professor of rhetoric speaks. His name is Agamemnon. He is, however, a conglomerate of Homer and Aeschylus<sup>22</sup> and other authors, rather than a literary reminiscence from a single source, a visual reminder, and inversion, of the distance between his time and the Classical and pre-Classical Greek past.

Hybridity is the second strand, and Aeschylus himself crossed material over from other genres to his plays (Athenaeus 8.347E; Radt *TrGF III*: Aeschylus T112a = Chameleon fr 26 West):

[Αἰσχύλος] τὰς αὐτοῦ τραγωιδίας τεμάχῃ εἶναι ἔλεγεν τῶν Ὀμήρου μεγάλων δείπνων.

20 See Martano, Metelli, and Mirhady 2012, 312–3; Pausanias states that the stele of Aeschylus had his name, his father's name, and his city. 'City' where one expects 'deme' belongs to the tradition that the grave of Aeschylus was in Sicily.

21 For Petronius, I use the text and follow the order of passages in Ernout 1974.

22 The long-windedness of Petronius' Agamemnon (§§10, 28, 46, 48–50) is recognizable from Aeschylus (Seneca's Agamemnon speaks only 12 lines) but the *suasoria* and *sententiae* (§6) that provoke laughter seem more aimed at Seneca.

[Aischylos] said that his tragedies were “choice cuts”<sup>23</sup> from the great feasts of Homer.<sup>24</sup>

Plutarch *How to Study Poetry* 17A§2 marveled at how Aeschylus took the four lines on the weighing of souls of Achilles and Memnon (*Iliad* 22.210–3) and turned it into an entire play. It is probable, but unprovable that Aeschylus’ play was also influenced by the cyclic epic *Aethiopis*.<sup>25</sup>

Petronius is not the only imperial author to saddle an unctuous slave or freedman with a name from Aeschylus.<sup>26</sup> A bearer of the name Aeschylus is twice the target of Martial (9.4):<sup>27</sup>

Aureolis futui cum possit Galla duobus  
et plus quam futui, si totidem, addideris:  
aureolos a te cur accipit, Aeschylus, denos?  
Non fellat tanti Galla. Quis ergo? Tacet.

Galla can be fucked for two gold coins and more than fucked, if you double the price: why does she get 10 gold coins from you, Aeschylus? Galla does not blow for that much. What is it? She says nothing.

23 Τέμαχος (from τέμνω) is problematic since its meaning consistently is ‘slice’ (LSJK) and first applied to fish and then meat. The meaning of τεμάχῃ in Athenaeus is apparent from the context in which the jurist Ulpian is being chided for selecting fat, gristle and joints at dinner. Translations vary: for Scott 1921, 202 it was “pieces,” Olson 2008, 87 opts for “steaks,” Martano, Matelli, and Mirhadi 2012, 274 choose “slices.” West 2000, 338 prefers “cuts.”

24 West 2008, 338 lists 22 plays of Aeschylus where he thinks the plot was taken from Homer or the epic cycle. Sometimes the evidence is decisive: in *Penelope* fr. 187 Sommerstein Odysseus’ claim to be a Cretan royal can only be paralleled at *Odyssey* 19. 178–84, the fabrication he gives to Penelope: ἐγὼ γένος μὲν εἰμι Κρής ἀρχέστατον. For the *Penelope*, see below.

25 See Sommerstein 2008, 274–5 on the Ψυχόστασια. No fragments survive, but the play was also known to Pollux and a scholiast on the *Iliad*.

26 Menelaus is the favourite servant of Trimalchio (§27 and §81).

27 In 9.67 Martial crows about the sexual positions and perversions he got from a *puella* (1) in the first six lines of the poem. The final couplet infers that, because Aeschylus is foul, asking the same things from her would necessarily have a bad savour (*conditio*): *sed mihi pura fuit; tibi non erit, Aeschyle, si vis / accipere hoc munus conditioe mala*; cp. Henriksén 2012, 281–3.

Aeschylus can be an actual person and still have the lampoon applied to the playwright by his audience.<sup>28</sup> Martial elsewhere used characterizations from Aeschylean tragedy that had passed into commonplaces. Orestes and Pylades, for example, are used three times as examples of unshakeable friendship (6.11, 7.24, and 10.11)<sup>29</sup> and a barber wounds as badly as Prometheus was (11.84). Early in his career, Martial reports Prometheus (*LS* 7.1) as chained to a rock for execution in the Flavian amphitheater.

Zeitlin has written that “[i]t is typical of Statius to acknowledge Aeschylus’ portrayal in a reversal.” In this, Statius is not alone. Lucan inverted the scene in *Eumenides* 94–139 in which Clytemnestra tried to awaken the drunken Erinyes in the appearance of the ghost of Julia to Pompey at *Pharsalia* 3.8–35.<sup>30</sup> In the programmatic opening to his *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus consciously inverts Aeschylus’ ἄπορα πόριμος (*PV* 904) so that what was ‘practicable’ becomes ‘impracticable.’<sup>31</sup> Josephus is concerned about men who rise above their station and find themselves at odds with god, a sentiment closely parallel to the chorus’ observation on seeing Io driven off-stage by stings.

Inversions work only if one can assume that readers are conversant with the original text. 19 of the 54 citations of Aeschylus in Plutarch’s *Moralia* are given without attribution; half from 5 of the extant plays. *Septem* 592–4 is cited three times by Plutarch:

οὐ γὰρ δοκεῖν ἄριστος ἀλλ’ εἶναι θέλει,  
βαθεῖαν ἄλοκα διὰ φρενὸς καρπούμενος,  
ἐξ ἧς τὰ κεδνὰ βλαστάνει βουλεύματα.

He wishes not to seem but to be best, reaping the deep furrow of his mind  
from which wise counsels sprout.

28 Teasing in the reversed situation remains common, as Greeks saddled with famous names can attest. One would like to be better informed whether one is meant to infer Aeschylean obscurity in *tacet*. Friedlander 1886 [1967], 53 seems open to the possibility in identifying Aeschylus with *unnatürlichen Lastern* in 9.4 and in his note to 9.67 lines 7–8.

Neither Euripides nor Sophocles occur as *eigennamen* in Martial; cp. Carl Frobeen’s index to Friedlander on *Wirkliche und fingerte Privatpersonen aus Martials Zeit* (#6) and *Thiernamen* (#7).

29 Seneca chose to compare the constancy of Crispus’ loyalty with Castor and Pollux in *Epigr.* 14 (Prato); cp. Harrison 1985, 87–134 who defends its authenticity.

30 Zeitlin 2009, 114. Pompey has a second dream at 7.7–25 in which he hears the applause in his theatre; cp. Pyłacz 2014, 104.

31 Feldman 2006, 417.

In *How to Study Poetry* 32D–E§11 Aeschylus is named in a section advising the student, like the soldier, not to be puffed up. Similarly, in *Sayings of Kings and Commanders* (186B Aristeides #5), Plutarch writes that when these lines, said by the scout about Amphiaraus, were delivered in the first performance, the audience looked towards Aristeides. In *How to Profit from One's Enemies* 88B§4, on envying the qualities and virtues of enemies rather than their possessions, Plutarch assumes that the reader will know the source of the quotation.

*Suppliants* 937 (πεσήμετ' ἀνδρῶν κάπολακτισμοὶ βίου, fall of men and kicking away of life), spoken by the herald, is cited by Plutarch at *De Curiositate* 517E§5 without attribution among salacious subjects savoured by scandalmongers. He returns to the subject, again assuming the audience knows the source, at *On the Face of the Moon* 937E§24 to illustrate how men on the moon would fall back to earth. Plutarch quotes two lines from the third strophe of the second choral ode at *Suppliants* 681–2 to illustrate the third of four kinds of inspiration (ἐνθουσιασμός) at *Amatorius* 759F§16:<sup>32</sup>

ἄχορον ἀκίθαριν δακρυογόνον Ἄρη  
βίαν τ' ἔνδημον ἐξοπλίζων

Ares arm[s] civil strife fully [which] causes tears, not dance or music.

The association of Aeschylus with war is enough to suggest the parallel; the name of Sophocles alone, in a similar association-by-guilt, (*TrGF* 778) is enough to suggest Bacchic frenzy.

The *Amatorius* has two citations from the *Libation Bearers* without attribution. 755C§11, on women running their own government in Lemnos, a novelty too fantastic for Plutarch's father to comprehend, as in fact it was for the chorus in Aeschylus' play (631–4):

32 *Suppliants* is referenced again at *De Defectu Oraculorum* 417E–F§15 where Plutarch states that Aeschylus erred to write that Apollo was banned from heaven (214) because one does not speak ill of the gods. Compare also *Suppliants* 226 on birds eating birds (*Roman Questions* 286C#93), and *Suppliants* 770 on danger of navigation at night (*Quaestiones Convivales* 619E question 3 and *Against Epicurus* 1090A§5).

κακῶν δὲ πρεσβεύεται τὸ Λήμνιον  
 λόγῳ, γοᾶται δὲ δῆμοθεν κατὰ-  
 πτυστον, ἥικασεν δέ τις  
 τὸ δεινὸν αὖ Λημνίοισιν πῆμασιν.

of evils the Lemnian one takes precedence in myth, contemptible it raises a groan among the people, some assign later reverses to this Lemnian calamity.

Orestes reveals to the chorus parts of the oracle he received from Apollo commanding him to kill his father's murderers. Lines 269–305 list what horrors Orestes could expect if he did not obey Apollo's command. Among them was that he would be unhonoured and defriended (ἄτιμον κᾶφιλον, 295), which Plutarch compares (756E§13) to sex without passion, a drink, so Plutarch claims, that can never quench.

The second quotation in Plutarch's *Consolation to Apollonius* is from Euripides and Euripides is named. Immediately before (102B§2), Plutarch quotes from *Prometheus Bound* 379–80:

“ψυχῆς” γὰρ “νοσοῦσης εἰσὶν ἰατροὶ λόγοι,  
 ὅταν τις ἐν καιρῷ γε μαλθάσση κέαρ.”

For “words are doctors of the sick soul, when, at the right time, someone soothes the heart.”

In the Oxford text the two lines are assigned to different speakers at the beginning of the stichomythia between Oceanus and Prometheus (378–81):

OK. οὐκ οὖν, Προμηθεῦ, τοῦτο γινώσκεις, ὅτι  
 ὀργῆς νοσοῦσης εἰσὶν ἰατροὶ λόγοι;  
 ΠΡ. ἐάν τις ἐν καιρῷ γε μαλθάσση κέαρ  
 καὶ μὴ σφριγῶντα θυμὸν ἰσχναίνει βίαι.

OK. Do you not know, Prometheus, that words are doctors of sick anger?

PR. If someone should smooth the heart at the right time and not constrict the puffed up spirit by force.

Plutarch, however, has Cicero in mind—his misattribution of speakers and ψυχῆς for ὀργῆς follows Cicero's translation of the Greek in a passage

questioning the suitability of slathering *consolationes* with philosophy and poetry (*Tusculanae Disputationes* 31§74–6):<sup>33</sup>

Sunt etiam qui haec omnia genera consolando colligant—alius enim alio modo movetur—ut fere nos in Consolatione omnia in consolationem unam coniecimus, erat enim in tumore animus, et omnis in eo temptabatur curatio. Sed sumendum tempus est non minus in animorum morbis quam in corporum ut *Prometheus* ille Aeschyli, cui cum dictum esset:

“Atqui, Prometheus, te hoc tenere existimo,  
mederi posse rationem iracundiae,”  
respondit:

“Siquidem qui tempestivam medicinam admovens  
non adgravescens vulnus inlidat manu.”

Some, in giving consolation, collect every hackneyed trope—someone else might be moved by such a thing—so that we almost throw everything for a Consolation into one consolation, just as if the soul was sick and the sum total of every expression of consolation was the cure. But time must be given no less to diseases of the soul than of the body, such as Aeschylus’ *Prometheus*, to whom is attributed:

“And yet, Prometheus, I think you believe this, that reason can cure  
anger”

He responded:

“if the one applying appropriate medicine, does not, heavy-handedly,  
cause a wound.”

Plutarch’s ψυχῆς would seem to draw on Cicero’s *animus*, although Cicero in the quotation substitutes *rationem* for Aeschylus’ ῥηγῆς. The inconsolability of Prometheus is the ground on which Plutarch by his example and Cicero in his discussion debate the suitability of consolation. The sentiment of the text is well enough known that Cicero, and then Plutarch, over-write some of it for their own ends, in Cicero’s case changing the metaphor from deflating a chest swollen with pride to bungling a cure.<sup>34</sup>

33 Plutarch otherwise stays much closer to the Greek of Aeschylus than Cicero, something which is as much or more illustrative of Cicero’s working methods, and Plutarch’s, than of later appropriation of Aeschylus’ texts.

34 The choral lyric that Io joins in the *Prometheus Bound* is cited by Plutarch *De Ira* 456A§6 when he mentions the pitch pipe that Gracchus had a servant toot to keep his speaking on topic. The passage in Aeschylus is how Hermes playing a pipe adds to Io’s agitation.

“Throwing everything for Consolation into one consolation” describes Lucian’s practice. Descent from Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* is instantly apparent in his *Prometheus* yet Lucian’s satire ‘draws inspiration from variegated literary *topoi* as well as different authors and genres,” to quote Bizia. Further, Lucian’s target is not the play or the myth but, as elsewhere in his *corpus*, sophists and pedants of his own time.<sup>35</sup> Aeschylus becomes more a familiar point of departure than a talisman.

This leads into the third strain of emulation of Aeschylus: passages from his plays so well known that they become ornaments scattered in works to give them lustre (section 2 below). At the far end of the spectrum of this group are works that are forged to take advantage of the reputation of Aeschylus. For both to function, the reputation of Aeschylus must be high enough to make it attractive to lean on his authority.<sup>36</sup>

Jacobson has stated that “Jewish writers forged works in the names of well-known pagan writers in an attempt to convince non-Jews of the value of Jews and Judaism,” citing twelve verses on the nature of god (fr. 464 *TrGF*) that are an obvious late Hellenistic forgery.<sup>37</sup> At the very least one can say that Aeschylus was held in high esteem by the Hellenised Jewish community. Philo certainly knew Aeschylus well: his *Life of Moses* I.279§51 references fr. 62 *TrGF* (= fr. 162

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35 Bizia 2015, 1. Ni’ Mheallaigh 2014 considers Prometheus in Lucian to be a “metaliterary icon” (6), which transforms his role significantly from Aeschylus’ vision of how the myth should resonate. Procopius, in contrast, cites Aeschylus (iv.6.15) but his error on the *Prometheus Bound* is so egregious that he is unlikely to have read Aeschylus; see Cameron 1985, 217 but more recently and sympathetically, Haar Romney 2007.

36 The practice pre-dates the Roman Empire if one accepts that the *Prometheus Bound* was written by Aeschylus’ son.

37 2009, 27–8. One might perhaps consider in this light, more unusual because it is in Latin and not Greek, Petronius fr. 37, printed by Ernout, but not by most editors:

Iudaeus licet et porcinum numen adoret.  
et caeli summas advocet auriculas,  
ni tamen et ferro succiderit inguinis oram.  
et nisi nodatum solverit arte caput,  
exemptus populo Graia migrabit ab urbe.  
et non ieiuna sabbata lege premet.

The repeated *et* at the beginning of the even numbered lines is not favoured Petronian style and lines 7–8, almost certainly a later interpolation, cast more suspicion on the authenticity of lines 1–6:

una est nobilitas argumentumque coloris.  
ingenui, timidas non habuisse manus.



Sommerstein) from the *Niobe* on divine origin of the soul,<sup>38</sup> *De Aeternitate Mundi* 49 cites from the *Myrmidons* (fr. 139 Sommerstein) on an eagle struck by an arrow, and *That Every Virtuous Man is Free* (*Probus*) 143 brings in the prophetic bow of the *Argo* for comparison.<sup>39</sup> His essay *Whether Dumb Animals Possess Reason* and his exegesis of *Exodus* also quote from Aeschylus.<sup>40</sup>

Jay has much to say about Josephus, a Hellenised Jewish leader who, like Plutarch, embraced *Romanitas*, spending much time in Rome.<sup>41</sup> Josephus in the *Jewish Antiquities* and in the *Bellum Judaicum* views Jewish resistance largely in tragic terms, and that brings him to Aeschylus. Like Eteocles (*Septem* 181–202), Josephus is forced to silence mourning so that it not weaken the resolve of the troops (*Bell. Jud.* 3.262–3). *Seven against Thebes* again comes to mind when Josephus reflects on dying without children: the chorus (*Septem* 822–31) weighs whether to wail for the leaders of Thebes who have lost their children.<sup>42</sup> Feldman agrees that tragedy influenced Josephus deeply, and that several times in the *Jewish Antiquities* Josephus uses words in meanings restricted to the tragedians, and particularly Aeschylus.<sup>43</sup> It is more than just verbal reminiscence: motifs are taken over from Aeschylus. For Josephus, for example, stubbornness

38 The attribution is from Plato *Republic* 3.391E. Citations from Plato are problematic, however, since fr. 154a15–6 Sommerstein (= *Republic* 380A) is quoted out of context as papyrus finds now prove.

39 Fr. 20 Sommerstein. Philo does not specify the play, which is assigned by Sommerstein to the *Argo*.

One is less convinced by Hedlam's note to his commentary of the *Eumenides* 212 that Philo glossed this passage at *De Specialibus Legibus* III.22§4 on marriage between half siblings not being incestuous if the shared parent was the father. On this point see also Mitchell 2013, 97.

40 Cf. Licism 2013 on these two essays of Philo. Unsurprisingly, Philo's interests overlap with his two great contemporaries, the Stoic Seneca and Plutarch, with whose Platonism Philo was much more in accord. Philo's essay on animals is interesting not just because it became the focus of several essays in Plutarch but because the dialogue features Philo and his nephew, Tiberius Julius Alexander, governor of Egypt and later second-in-command under Titus in Judaea. For tragic influences and the New Testament, whose composition belongs to the lifetimes of Philo-Seneca-Plutarch, see Jay 2014 on Mark, and Fitzgerald 2001 on Paul.

41 2014, 143–56. See esp. chapter 4 “Interpreting the Tragic as a Mode in Early Jewish Literature.”

42 Jonquiere 2007, 178–9.

43 See Feldman 2006, 417 on ἐκπράσσειν from *Persians* 713, *Suppliants* 472, and *Agamemnon* 582, 1275 at *Jewish Antiquities* 17. 101 and 106 and 18.342. Hommel 1954 had earlier observed Josephan importation of *Agamemnon* 1061.

reminds him of Prometheus (*Prometheus Bound* 1034),<sup>44</sup> and the metaphor of iron (*Septem* 767 and 908) as arbiter between Eteocles and Polynices is taken over by Josephus.<sup>45</sup>

Plutarch is perhaps unsurpassed in peppering his passages with quotations from philosophy and drama. If his profession at Delphi was religious and outlook philosophical, he instinctively read life as dramatic. At the moment Demetrius turned despotic (*Dem.* 28), Plutarch wryly noted that his comedy had changed to tragedy.<sup>46</sup> It is, thus, not surprising that Plutarch is the greatest source of fragments from tragedy, particularly ones that cannot be assigned to a specific play. His view of drama is important for assessing Aeschylus' reputation within the early Empire. For example, after praising the mathematical knowledge of tuna, Plutarch continues (979E), quoting Aeschylus (fr. 308 Sommerstein; from a satyr play) that they squint from poor vision. Later authors used Plutarch as a source book: Athenaeus 7.303C cites Aeschylus via Plutarch and Aelian also cites this fragment in his *On the Nature of Animals* 9.42. The ancient equivalent of something suddenly coming to mind—they said “mouth” (στόμα; fr. 351 TrGF)—is attributed to Aeschylus by Plutarch's father, anxious for a change of subject (*Amatorius* 763B§18).

Further, Plutarch continually engages with Plato and he sometimes uses Aeschylus as support. Plato *Republic* 383B repeats nine lines spoken by Thetis and attributes them to Aeschylus. Plutarch quotes lines 7–8 in *How to Study Poetry* 16E§2 in a context parallel to that of the *Republic* on the unreliability of poets.<sup>47</sup> At 36B§14 in the same essay, Plutarch allows the exception that quotes from tragedy are acceptable when they support the doctrines (δόγματα) of Pythagoras and Plato. One of his examples, fr. 352 Sommerstein (θάρσει· πόνου γὰρ ἄκρον οὐκ ἔχει χρόνον; take courage: the sting of pain is short), is commended for agreeing with Epicurus. Aeschylus is placed in evidence (fr. 353 Sommerstein) that death is not an evil in Plutarch's *Consolation to Apollonius* 106C§10. The quote immediately following might be a paraphrase of the first line of fr. 255 Sommerstein from Aeschylus' *Philoctetes* in which Philoctetes

44 Feldman 2006, 418.

45 Jonquiere 2005, 323 nos. 73 and 74 to 241.

46 On the *Life of Demetrius*, see Harrison 1995, 91–104. Plutarch's literary quotations have been collected by Helmbold and O'Neil 1959.

47 Plutarch's Platonism shows through in his scorn for poetic fabrications of the dismemberment of Horus [Osiris] and decapitation of Isis. His reaction is to use spit (ἀποπτύσαι δεῖ) —quoting Aeschylus fr. 354 Sommerstein—as a way to avert the “evil eye” (*On Isis and Osiris* 358E§20).

addresses Death the Healer since *Consolation to Apollonius* 109F§15 seems to cite a version of the third line of the fragment as preserved in Maximus of Tyre.

While Aeschylus was hardly appreciated in the early days of the Roman empire, “the second Sophistic saw a rehabilitation of his reputation, particularly in the Greek East.”<sup>48</sup> Athenaeus 347E on Aeschylus taking “choice cuts” from Homer is often quoted. It is worth quoting some of the sentence that follows:<sup>49</sup>

φιλόσοφος δὲ ἦν τῶν πάντων ὁ Αἰσχύλος, ὃς καὶ ἡττηθεὶς ἀδίκως ποτὲ ... ἔφη Χρόνῳ τὰς τραγωιδίας ἀνατιθέναι, εἰδὼς ὅτι κομιέται τὴν προσήκοθσαν τιμὴν.

Aeschylus was very much a philosopher, who once when he unjustly lost ... said that he dedicated his tragedies to posterity, knowing that it would arrange the appropriate value.

At 13.600B Athenaeus applies the adjective “revered” (ὁ σεμνότατος δ’ Αἰσχύλος) which stands out because Athenaeus is often chary of adjectives. Pausanias (2.133) and the Severan writer Diogenes Laertius (2.13.6–7) are the sources for Aeschylus as the best writer of satyr plays (*infra* Papyri). Pausanias is not atypical: Aeschylus is mentioned by name eleven times, twice in relation to the battle of Marathon (1.14.5; 1.21.2), several times for his staging practice (e.g., 1.28.6 first to describe Furies with snakey-hair), several times for statements of his that passed into public currency (e.g., 2.20.5 on seven as the number of leaders against Thebes), and on how he researched information for his plays (e.g., 9.22.7 *Glaucus Potniae*). Euripides by comparison is mentioned twice and Sophocles once.

### The Plays “In Play”

The following section brings together a (near) complete list of the fragmentary references to Aeschylus in the Roman empire as a way of helping us understand Aeschylus, reputation. What Plutarch, Athenaeus, and papyri do, in addition, is indicate what plays of Aeschylus remained in production, or at the least were being read often enough by enough different people that they retained cultural currency. The number of plays, and significantly satyr

48 A different picture emerges for the Latin west and for earlier in the empire in Holford-Strevens 1999, whose “Sophocles at Rome” first piqued my interest about Aeschylus’ imperial audience.

49 Irby-Massey 2008, 134.

dramas, of Aeschylus referred to by imperial writers beg the question of when the canon of seven plays of Aeschylus was formed and how much the process of excerpting accelerated the process.<sup>50</sup> Decisive, again, are plays in which Aeschylus is not named which presumes that the plays and author were well-known. The seven plays that survive are not discussed in this section.

For some of the plays preserved now only in fragments, one might argue, especially for the *adespota* and ones whose attribution is not secure, that they were already being mined in antiquity rather than put in production. Some of the fragments for which titles are secure could also have been cited to gloss lexical oddities or as *color*. There are instances, however, where quotations from a play are either long or there are multiple citations, or they are part of an extensive discussion of a play or mythological character for whom the citations come entirely (or nearly so) from plays. In these instances, one might entertain an argument for continued production and not excerpting,<sup>51</sup> particularly if quotations come from both dialogue and choral odes and parts of the play other than the prologue.

The only play from which there are secure citations from both Plutarch and Athenaeus, the *Cabiri*, is perhaps emblematic of the problems of assessing Aeschylus' reputation during the Roman Empire on the basis of surviving evidence.<sup>52</sup> There is the very real sense that Aeschylus is built into a discussion rather than that a discussion was built around Aeschylus. With few exceptions,

50 So, for example, Raeburn and Thomas 2011, 71. This is not to say that some plays of Aeschylus were more popular than others; popular taste can be demonstrated at least as early as the late Classical period; cp. Nervegna 2014, 157–88 and this volume. What counsels caution is to restrict too early popular knowledge of the seven plays of Aeschylus that are still known. See also Simelidis, this volume.

51 As against Olson 2011, 31 n. 47 on a “collection of materials” he believes was used for Athenaeus 13.561A–C and 13.599F–600D and Jacob 2000 and 2013; see *Danaids* immediately below.

52 Aeschylean authorship of the *Neaniskoi* has been doubted, although Sommerstein 2008, 152–3 places it as third play in a Lycurgan tetralogy: Athenaeus 11.503 discussing ceramic shapes used in wine service notes that the *psykter* was also a word for cool, shady spots citing fr. 146 Sommerstein.

Further, Hermann's assignment of a three-line fragment to this play has not generally found favour. Writing on the *E at Delphi* 389A–B§9, Plutarch links the natures of Apollo and Dionysus, declaring that Apollo is praised via the paeon while dithyramb, with its emotion, is better suited to Dionysus:

μειξοβόαν πρέπει.  
διθύραμβον ὁμαρτεῖν.  
σύγκωμον Διῷ ὤσωι.

It is suitable that dithyramb, shout mixing fellow reveler, attends on Dionysus.

Aeschylus is peripheral rather than the exegesis of a passage or a debate about a passage being the point.

### *Cabiri*

Athenaeus 10. 428E–429A indicates that Jason and his crew appeared in this play and that they were drunk. Since this statement immediately follows his observation that Aeschylus, not Euripides, was the first to introduce drunken men on stage (*TrGF* T117a), Sommerstein (2008, 108) claims *Cabiri* as a tragedy and not a satyr play.<sup>53</sup> The catalogue of the Argonauts (so a *scholium* to Pindar, *Pythian* 4.303), however, suggests a parody of *Iliad* 2 and Apollonius of Rhodes which might make this play more likely a satyr drama.<sup>54</sup>

The first question raised in *Quaestiones Convivales* 11 is on subjects about which one can tease when drinking after dinner. Section 7 (633A) raises the possibility that censure (μέμψις) in teasing (σκώμμα) can be amusing if risky. The comic context in which Plutarch speaks would seem to inform the force of the iambs:<sup>55</sup> the Cabiri threaten playfully to run the house short of vinegar (ῥξους σπανίζειν δῶμα, *TrGF* 97).<sup>56</sup> Athenaeus in his discussion of dancing and gestures, much of it non-choral, mentions that the Syracusans perfected a drunken messenger dance (τὴν ἀγγελικὴν δὲ πάροινον ἡκριβουν ὄρχησιν; 14.629E). All other special dances are associated with comedies or satyr plays.

### *Prometheus Pyrkaïos*

Near the beginning of *How to Profit from One's Enemies* (86F§2) Plutarch gives examples of how seemingly useless or harmful things can be harnessed. The only example accompanied by a quotation is of a satyr who on first seeing fire wanted to kiss it (φιλήσαι) and to throw his arms around it (περιβαλεῖν), but was warned off by Prometheus who said he would mourn his beard (τράγος, γένειον ἄρα πενθήσεις σύ γε; fr. 207 Sommerstein; Podlecki 2005, 6–7).<sup>57</sup>

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Whether the fragment does, or does not, belong to this play, it nevertheless shows that Aeschylus' lyrics, as well as dramatic scenes, continued to be known.

53 There can be no doubt that Athenaeus considered the *Cabiri* a tragedy because he uses τραγωιδίαν in both the sentence before and after mentioning the *Cabiri*.

54 So Podlecki 2005, 12–3, following Krumreich-Pechstein-Seidensticker, but with reservations. For Sophocles' rebuke that drunken actors on stage was tantamount to self-portrayal for Aeschylus, see above.

55 Fr. 96 Sommerstein has choral anapests and fr. 95 Sommerstein iambs.

56 Plays on "vinegar" as opposed to "wine" form other parts of this question in Plutarch.

57 The joke turns on what "beard" is meant: "kiss" would seem one area, and "embrace" another. In antiquity, Aeschylus was thought the best writer of satyr dramas. Not surprisingly 19 of

*Niobe*<sup>58</sup>

Frequently used as a tag by Seneca in his philosophy and tragedies,<sup>59</sup> in *How to Study Poetry* 17B§2 Plutarch cites fr 154a lines 15–16 (Sommerstein) on how the gods implant a flaw (αἰτίαν, 15) in someone when they want to destroy his family (δῶμα παμπήδην):

θεὸς μὲν αἰτίαν φύει βροτοῖς,  
ὅταν κακῶσαι δῶμα παμπήδην θέλῃ.

God implants a flaw in men, when he wants to destroy his family thoroughly.

The same couplet is quoted at *Against the Stoics on Common Conceptions* 1065E§14, again without attribution, to argue against the Stoic position that vice as well as virtue has a divine origin.<sup>60</sup> In *That a Philosopher Ought to Converse especially with Men in Power* 778B§3 Plutarch quotes Tantalus speaking about the extensiveness of the land he owns (fr. 158 Sommerstein = *TrGF* 153) as an example how a philosopher could educate the ruler to see his land-holdings, not as a boast, but as how much he can feed his people.<sup>61</sup> The same words are cited again in *On Exile* 603A§10 where Tantalus' words are used to show that an equal amount of land in a large place does not make one happier if the land was the space of an entire island. Plutarch continues with three lines (fr. 159 Sommerstein = *TrGF* 154), in the same speech of Tantalus on how his spirit (θυμός) once reached heaven but has now fallen to earth, counseling: γίγνωσκε τάνθρωπεια μὴ σέβειν ἄγαν (do not accord reverence<sup>62</sup> to human things too much).

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the 75 known satyr dramas are by Aeschylus; cp. Krumreich-Pechstein-Seidensticker 1999. For just Aeschylus' satyr dramas, see Podlecki 2005, 1–19.

58 The best treatment of *Niobe* remains that of Seaford 2005. *Niobe* is one of the few plays of Aeschylus mentioned by name in the life in the Medicus manuscript.

59 Dissolution of the universe and personal responsibility are frequent themes in Seneca; cp. Harrison 2014, 635–6.

60 At 21 lines, it is one of the longer fragments of Aeschylus. It remains problematic because much of the left edge in the papyrus (PSI 1208) is missing; assignment to *Niobe* is due to a reference in Hesychius 5579. Of perhaps more importance, is that that fr. 154a lines 15–16 shows that Plato knowingly took the lines out of context at *Resp.* 380A.

61 The text is corrupt which makes interpretation difficult. Four lines are preserved at Strabo 12.8.21, of which Plutarch quotes only the first eight words.

62 By the time of Plutarch, σεβαστός and its related words, had become part of the imperial ideology inherited from the Hellenistic dynasts.

*Philoctetes*<sup>63</sup>

When arguing that nothing existed before death or after death, as Socrates once had, in his *Consolation to Apollonius* 109F§15, Plutarch cites fr. 255 l. 3 Sommerstein (= *TrGF* 255),<sup>64</sup> without attribution, as evidence along with Euripides *Troades* 636. The first line of this fragment (ὦ θάνατε παιῶν, μὴ μ' ἀτιμάσῃς μολεῖν) is not quoted by Plutarch; rather, he gives a paraphrase from another author (unnamed) while the original source is cited as Aeschylus (ὦ θάνατε, παιῶν ἱατρὸς μόλοις, 106D§10).<sup>65</sup> Aeschylus is named in fragment 252 Sommerstein (= 252 *TrGF*) on how pain can and does persist in his discourse against Epicureanism (*Non Posse Suaviter Vivi Secundum Epicurum* 1087F§3), quoting two lines thought to be spoken by Philoctetes to the chorus of Lemnian women. Plutarch's *De Tranquillitate Animi* 18 lays out the argument that people fear death more than they desire death; 476B, in which the Aeschylus fragment occurs, is a mosaic of quotations, none of which are attributed, supporting this point among which is a quote attached to Odysseus clinging to the a fig-tree (*Odyssey* 12. 432) that the "wind would neither let him stay or sail away."

*Myrmidons*

Daphnaeus, a speaker in Plutarch's *Amatorius*, is anxious to cut off the other speaker, Protogenes, and turn the topic from boy-love to heterosexual intercourse. But before he does, he quotes two lines that he attributes to Aeschylus, normally assigned to Achilles addressing the body of the dead Patroclus (751C§5; fr. 135 Sommerstein = 135 *TrGF*):<sup>66</sup>

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- 63 Although only six fragments (249–55 Sommerstein) of Aeschylus' *Philoctetes* survive, we are reliably informed about Aeschylus' version, as well as Euripides', from the comparison made by Dio Chrysostom *Orat.* 52. The only full treatment of this play is by Calder 1970; Sommerstein 2008, 253 cites Müller 2000 and Jouan 2002, which, however, are more about Euripides. The solution to Odysseus on stage in Aeschylus, as opposed to Euripides and Sophocles, is Aeschylus' penchant that people responsible for a problem take part in its resolution (so Achilles in *Telephus*, fr. 238, 239 Sommerstein) or be present for the consequences (*Oresteia*).
- 64 Stobaeus 4.52.32 gives the second half of the first line and the second and third line, and attributes them to Aeschylus. The opening vocative to Death the Healer is preserved in Maximus of Tyre *Disc.* 7.5E.
- 65 That Aeschylus is the named source of the fragment that introduces section 10 (fr. 353 Sommerstein = *TrGF* 353) increases the likelihood that what follows the line inspired by fr. 255 l. 1 Sommerstein is also from Aeschylus ("λιμήν", γὰρ ὄντως, "Αἰδᾶς ἀνιᾶν").
- 66 Sommerstein 2008, 144–5. Daphnaeus had earlier (763B§18) changed the subject by quoting Aeschylus on something that had just come to mind (ὅτι νῦν ἦλθεν ἐπὶ στόμα; *adespota* fr. 351 *TrGF*).

σέβας δὲ μηρῶν ἀγνὸν οὐ κατηιδέσω,  
ὦ δυσχάριστε τῶν πυκνῶν φιλημάτων.

you shamed the pure reverence of thighs,  
least thankful for numberless kisses.<sup>67</sup>

The first line with its reference to intercrural sex (μηρῶν) is dropped but the second line is repeated, without attribution, in *How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend* 61A§19.<sup>68</sup> The situation is reversed at Athenaeus 13.601A where the erotic (ἐρωτικῶν) and lascivious (ἀκόλαστον) heterosexual songs of Alcman and Stesichorus (οὐ μετρίως ἐρωτικός) segway into acceptable homoerotic love (τὰ ἐρωτικά πραγματεία), the first example of which is Aeschylus from this play where Achilles shows his love for Patroclus.

### *Archeresses*

One two-line quotation from Aeschylus' play on Actaeon, in which Actaeon either compared himself favourably to Artemis as a hunter or expressed carnal interest, reveals as much about Plutarch's working method as it indicates the reputation of Aeschylus in the early Empire. Fragment 243 Sommerstein (= *TrGF* 243) is based on the third century BCE scholar, Antigonos of Carystus. Plutarch's readings in *Amatorius* 767B§21 agrees with the version printed in Sommerstein while quotation of the same line in *Progress in Virtue* 81D§10 differs in a number of details. It can mean either that Plutarch's memory was flawed or that Aeschylus was so much a part of cultural memory that Plutarch could change and paraphrase as suited to the context. In the quotation, Actaeon claims to have such a practiced eye that he can tell from a hungry expression a woman who has had sex. In *Progress in Virtue*, the student who has made real progress is always easy to spot. In *Amatorius*, however, the quotation is part of a conversation wherein the speaker cannot accept that signs are added to the face of an unchaste woman but no further beauty to the face of a chaste married one.<sup>69</sup>

67 Quoted also by Athenaeus 602E where the end of the first line reads οὐκ ἐπηιδέσω. This passage in Athenaeus is also the source of the stories that Minos abducted Ganymede and Zeus in turn stole Ganymede from him and that Theseus was allowed Ariadne because of Minos' affection for Theseus.

68 The context is the jealousy of Antony whose friends suspected that Antony's affection for Cleopatra was unrequited, yet dissembled out of concern for Antony.

69 A few paragraphs earlier in the *Amatorius* 763B18 summarizes the most famous poem from Sappho.



*Prometheus Unbound*

Plutarch fondly ridicules his father's passion on several topics. One *bête noir*, crediting the presence of gods too much in one's activities, causes Plutarch's father to ask rhetorically at *Amatorius* 757D§2 whether Hercules prayed to Apollo while drawing his bow to shoot the eagle that had been tormenting Prometheus (fr. 200 Sommerstein = *TrGF* 200). One two-line fragment is worth quoting:

ἴππων ὄνων τ' ὀχεῖα καὶ ταύρων γονάς  
 δοὺς ἀντίδουλα<sup>1</sup> καὶ πόνων ἐκδέκτορα  
 ἰαντίδωρα

having given the progeny of horses, donkeys and bulls as substitute slaves  
 and relievers of labour

Nauck (*TrGF* 194) accepted these lines as coming from the *Prometheus Unbound* while Sommerstein (fr. 189a) concedes no more than that it comes from one of the two fragmentary Prometheus plays. The variant, ἀντίδωρα, which occurs in Plutarch 964F§7, meaning a “gift given in return” can make sense if the context is the quarrel between Zeus and Prometheus, but even Cherniss and Helmbold restored ἀντίδουλα in their text on the basis of Porphyry's quotation of line two in *De Abstinencia* 3.18 (= fr. 193 Sandbach).<sup>70</sup> The lines are quoted by Plutarch, *De Fortuna* 98C§3 to illustrate that intelligence is what separates men from beasts. *On the Cleverness of Animals* 964F§7 makes the complimentary argument, with the same quotation, that man is just to exploit animals that have reason (λόγος).

*Trophoi (dub.)*<sup>71</sup>

No secure fragments of this satyr play survive. Its plot, the rejuvenation of the nurses of Dionysus, is known from a hypothesis to Euripides' *Medea*.<sup>72</sup> Plutarch in his essay, *The Stoics Talk More Paradoxically than the Poets* 1057F2, attacks the Stoic notion that only the wise man can be good looking. Iolaos' prayer at Euripides' *Heracleidae* 849–63 that suddenly restored his potency

70 1968, 352. Porphyry's essay lauds vegetarianism; Sandbach 1969, 352–3 dismisses the possibility that Porphyry could be referring to the very fragmentary essays *De Esu Carnium I* (993A–996C) or *De Esu Carnium II* (996D–999B).

71 The attribution of this fragment rests on a conjecture by Hartung, rejected by Sommerstein 2008, 316 as earlier Nauck 361 *TrGF*; cp. Podlecki 2005, 14–5.

72 Sommerstein 2008, 248–9.

seems central<sup>73</sup> to the point under discussion to which a line from Aeschylus on the discomforts of old age is inserted (ἐξ ὀσφθαλγούς κῶδυνοσπάδος λυγροῦ / γέροντος, fr. 361 Sommerstein).

### *Women of Salamis (dub.)*

As preserved, Plutarch's extremely fragmentary *On Monarchy, Democracy and Oligarchy* 827C§4 ends with a quote from an unknown play of Aeschylus (fr. 359 Sommerstein). Sommerstein raises the possibility that it could come from Aeschylus' *Women of Salamis*.<sup>74</sup> The tragic character of the line is apparent from its quotation by Demetrius Poliorctetes at one low ebb of his fortune (Plutarch *Life of Demetrius* 35.4): σύ τοι μ' ἔφθασας, σύ με †καταΐθειν† δοκεῖς (you bore me, you seem to bury<sup>75</sup> me).

### *Adespota*

Quotations from plays of Aeschylus where the source cannot be attributed are likely to be ornaments. Plutarch on the *Obsolescence of Oracles* 434A§43 mentions that the copper mine in Euboea was tapped and adds a tag from Aeschylus on Euboean swords (fr. 356 *TrGF*, fr. 356 Sommerstein). In *De Cohibenda Ira* 454E§4 Plutarch compares extinguishing a candle with the greater ease of restraining anger at its beginning, citing Aeschylus on the effects of fire on, presumably, wooden objects (*adespota* fr. 357 Sommerstein). Plutarch *De Primo Frigido* 950E§14 quotes Aeschylus (fr. 360 *TrGF*) on how water stops the hybris of fire, citing the *hapax* πᾶςσυβριν.

There are exceptions when the quotation is central to the argument: in one of the shortest of the *Greek Questions* (293A#10), Plutarch asks what is a 'sheep-escaper' (φυξίμηλα). His answer is that it is a plant that is left alone by sheep when it reaches a certain height, as he concludes from Aeschylus (τὸ δὲ μαρτύριον Αἰσχύλος, fr. 447 *TrGF*).

Plutarch's choice of topics from Aeschylus is largely scatter-shot: sex occurs several times (satyrs embracing fire, homoerotic intercourse, loss of potency, glow on woman who has had sex) but otherwise there is the tragic flaw, desirability vs. fear of death, agricultural animals, low ebb of fortune, and rush to anger. It is not that Plutarch when thinking of "x" was reminded of Aeschylus;

73 The 6 surviving sections of this essay are so much shorter than normal practice for Plutarch that one suspects, individual passages were lifted, and preserved, from a fuller work.

74 2008, 314–5. Assigned by Hartung to Tantalus in Aeschylus' *Niobe*.

75 The text is troubled, but the sense of καταΐθειν is to incinerate/burn to ash, which might suggest cremation.

it is, rather, that Aeschylus came to mind when Plutarch was considering one or another theme. The *exempla* from Aeschylus do not look like stock subjects; that is, the quotations came from knowledge of the plays and not collections of commonplaces.

### *Danaids*

On the basis of *POxy* 2256.3 (second or third century CE) it was the third play of the victorious Danaid tetralogy (463 BCE), of which only the *Suppliants* survives. The suspicion that *Suppliants* 977–9 was moved there from the *Danaids* indicates later productions.<sup>76</sup>

Athenaeus 13.600B quotes seven lines from the *Danaids* (fr. 44 Sommerstein) introducing it with καὶ ὁ σεμνότατος δ' Αἰσχύλος ἐν ταῖς Δαναΐσιν αὐτὴν παράγει τὴν Ἀφροδίτην λέγουσαν—in the *Danaids* the revered Aeschylus brings in Aphrodite herself, speaking of herself in the third person, but concluding the citation with τῶν δ' ἐγὼ παρὰίτιος (of these things I am the cause). The announced topic of Book 13 is a discussion of love (τὸν περὶ ἐρωτικῶν λόγον, 555B) and the section on the power of Aphrodite begins with a thirteen-line quotation from Euripides (*adespota* fr. 898).<sup>77</sup> The quotation from the *Danaids* is followed by lines 3–6 of the prologue to Euripides' *Hippolytus*, spoken by Aphrodite, and then three lines of iambic trimeter, possibly spoken by the chorus from Euripides' *Auge* (fr. 269 *TrGF*).<sup>78</sup> The citation from Euripides' *Hippolytus* is suggestive as it follows Athenaeus' statement that Aeschylus gave Aphrodite a speaking role. Potentially it is topical since Euripides assigns the prologue of his second *Hippolytus* to Aphrodite and introduces Artemis at line 1282 while the two goddesses are absent from the *Phaedra*, Seneca's version of the myth.

Although much has been written on the *Danaids*,<sup>79</sup> discussion has generally centered on marriage or on the relationship of this play to the *Suppliants*. Writing a generation before Athenaeus, Pausanias' debt to the tetralogy of

76 The date of which and circumstances, however, are unknown; Sommerstein 2008, 39; for more articles on date, see *Aeschylus: Oxford Bibliographies* 22–23 on-line. On the play in general, see Schierl 1986.

77 These lines imitate the quotation from the *Danaids* (Collard and Cropp 2008, 499), but are spoken by someone other than Aphrodite, possibly from the *Hippolytus Veiled*.

78 Identified by Stobaeus 4.20.11. The formula "Ἔρωτα δ' ὅστις μὴ θεὸν κρίνει μέγαν, the reading in Collard and Cropp 2008, 270, seems appropriate for choral observation.

79 See, esp., Rösler 2007 (= 1993) with corrective by Hutton 2005, 310 n. 70 that Pausanias "seems to regard them [Athenian tragedians] with little favour as a source of genuine mythical and religious traditions."

*Suppliants-Egyptians-Danaids-Amyclone*<sup>80</sup> in his visit to Argos is substantial if largely unacknowledged. The murder of 49 of the 50 brothers on their wedding night—an early example of murder to avoid spousal abuse in Pausanias’ view—and their flight to Argos on the pretext of kinship figures prominently in Pausanias’ sections on Argos. Places in Argos associated with Danaus (2.16.1; 2.19.3–7; 2.20.6–7; 2.25.4; 2.37.1–2; 2.38.4) are frequent as are those associated with the trial of Hypermnestra (2.19.6; 2.29.7; 2.21.1). Because three of the four plays of Aeschylus are missing and because Pausanias is chary in details, it is impossible to know how much of his account of Danaus and his daughters comes from Aeschylus.<sup>81</sup>

### *Sphinx*

Prometheus is mentioned in this satyr play, the fourth of the Theban tetralogy (467 BCE) of which the *Septem* survives. Athenaeus recounted a long, spirited discussion (15.665A–669A) between two of his dinner guests on the drinking game *kottabos*.<sup>82</sup> A prize (κοττάβεια) is offered to whose opinion will prevail, which transitions smoothly into a discussion of garlands. The greatest amount of space is reserved for willow crowns, on which there were several essays in antiquity (15.673D–674A). As willow branches were used for binding, they were appropriate as a crown made for Prometheus when he was released by Zeus (15.672E–F), which is why humans wear crowns of willow to honour Prometheus, so Aeschylus (Athenaeus 15.672E–F = *TrGF* 202). Discussion of willow crowns is closed by Athenaeus recalling this passage (15.674D) and then adding:

τῷ δὲ ξένῳι γε στέφανος, ἀρχαῖον †στέφος†,  
δεσμῶν ἄριστος ἐκ Προμηθέως λόγου.

for the visitor, a garland, once called *stephos*, is the best of bonds according to the mỗt of Prometheus.

80 On the satyr play *Amyclone*, see Podlecki 2005, 8–9 and Harrison 2018.

81 One suspects influence from the lost plays is significant since Danaus features in many places in Pausanias other than just Argos. Livy and Plutarch in their early histories/lives both acknowledge performance of plays as source material, although one agrees with Garvie 1969, 166 that Pausanias (among other prose sources) “must be treated with extreme caution as a basis for the reconstruction of Aeschylus’ trilogy.” On Livy, see Matthes 2014, 46 and Ginsberg 2015, 223–33.

82 One of whom was Ulpian, the distinguished jurist. On the *Sphinx*, see Podlecki 2005, 7–8 with additional bibliography in Sommerstein 2008, 241.

One assumes that the point of the quote—Athenaeus does not elaborate—is that Prometheus preferred willow as a crown on his head to restraints holding him to the rock.

### *Theoroi/Isthmiastai*

The one citation from this play not from POxy 2612 is from the same passage in Athenaeus about a scops owl dance. Athenaeus 14.629F gives enough detail that it is possible to reconstruct the dance step:

ἦν δὲ ὁ σκῶψ τῶν ἀποσκοπούντων τι σχῆμα ἄκραν τὴν χεῖρα ὑπὲρ τοῦ  
μετώπου κεκυρτωκότων. Μνημονεύει Αἰσχύλος ἐν *Θεωροῖς*<sup>83</sup>  
καὶ μὴν παλαιῶν τῶνδὲ σοι σκωπεθμάτων.

The scops owl is some kind of step looking out having cupped up the edge of the hand above the face. Aeschylus recalls in the *Theoroi*: and certainly of the hoary scops-steps.<sup>83</sup>

Parts of nearly 100 lines, few complete, of this play are preserved in a papyrus of the second century CE. The general story line is clear:<sup>84</sup> the satyrs have determined to take part in the Isthmian games, but once at Corinth abandon Dionysus and choral practice for athletic competitions with inevitable mischief and (one assumes) reconciliation with Dionysus. Confusion with a play of the same title by Epicharmus,<sup>85</sup> which was produced at an Isthmia in Sicily, has led to a sometimes mistaken belief that Aeschylus' play was first produced in Sicily during his stay there in the late 470s or 458–456 BCE.<sup>86</sup> This is not tenable since *Theoroi* was the satyr play in a tetralogy with *Athamas* and so had its first production at Athens.<sup>87</sup> The scene is evoked by mention of the temple to Poseidon as part of the backdrop (18) and to antefixes on the temple, on which the satyrs envision images of themselves (19–21).<sup>88</sup>

83 Olson 2011, 185 n. 143 is right to suspect some entendre. On satyr action on stage in this play, see O'Sullivan 2000; for satyr sexual play on stage, see Harrison 2005; for sexual entendres, see Slenders 2005 and Griffith 2015.

Athenaeus 9.391A–D gives much information on the scops owl.

84 Podlecki 2005, 13–4.

85 MacLachan 2012, 356. A mime for women by Sophron was likewise set at the Isthmia in Sicily.

86 See Smith, this volume on Aeschylus in Sicily.

87 Podlecki 2005, 14; for *Athamas*, see Sommerstein 2008, 2–5.

88 Antefixes (ornamental rain spouts) often had the features of Silenus, eldest of the satyrs, so the joke is not far fetched. Reference to a foundry on the site makes this play late since

### *Phorcides*

The sole interest in the one fragment that survives (Athenaeus 9.402B = fr. 261 Sommerstein) from a play on the Graeae in the Perseus myth is in a Sicilian dialect word for pig,<sup>89</sup> which in turn raises the larger question of the influence of Sicilian dialect on Aeschylus as a result of his visit there in the late 470s BCE (T92a Radt).<sup>90</sup> If Goins<sup>91</sup> is correct that Aeschylus' post-470 BCE plays have words in the Sicilian dialect, which would include prominently the tetralogy *Phorcides-Polydectes-unk.-Dictyulci*, then Athenaeus on the Sicilian *ιαμβιστάι* (181C), in a section on choral movements and configurations, is of potential relevance to his understanding of Aeschylus' staging.

### *Penelope*

Athenaeus 1.16E–17B, adduces Apion of Alexandria's gloss (*FGrH* 616F36) of oval-shaped stones (*πεσσοῖσι*) when he discusses excessive opulence. At *Odyssey* 1.107 the suitors each chose a stone and attempted to hit a stone placed among them metaphorically representing Penelope. The closer his stone, supposedly, the better his chance of obtaining Penelope. This scene may or may not have been included in Aeschylus' *Penelope*, for which one fragment survives (fr. 187 Sommerstein).<sup>92</sup> It is likely the second play in the *Odysseus* trilogy and the reference of this passage to *Penelope* becomes more likely, if unprovable, since Athenaeus continued by adducing fr. 180 Sommerstein which is generally assigned to the *Ostologoi*.

### *Ostologoi*

The context of Athenaeus 1. 17C–D is how poets use excesses from the Trojan War as a comment on their own times. The example cites Aeschylus fr. 180 Sommerstein in which Odysseus points out that one of the suitors had broken a chamber pot over his head, presumably when Odysseus was disguised as a beggar. Podlecki entertains the possibility that *Ostologoi* was a satyr drama

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the foundry at Isthmia was built only in the last decade of Aeschylus' life (Sutton 1981, 337).

89 About which see *Heralds* below. Distinctive modifications in the myth in this play by Aeschylus are known from Eratosthenes *Catasterisms* 22 (= fr. 262 *TrGF*).

90 See, for example, Gerber 1997, 38 n. 94 and Smith, this volume; Aeschylus' second visit (458–456 BCE) ended with his death at Gela and so post dates plays written and produced in Athens.

91 Goins 1997, 202 would include more prevalent Doricisms and link it to Athens' treaty with Argos (464 BCE), adding colour to *Suppliants* (463 BCE) and *Oresteia* (458 BCE).

92 Quoted above.

but Sommerstein considers it the third play of a trilogy on Odysseus, which Podlecki equally contemplates.<sup>93</sup> It takes its plot from *Odyssey* 24.412–548 in which the parents of the slain suitors come to collect their ashes. One can see the appeal to imperial sensibilities of the *Ostologoi*—Theseus ends Seneca's *Phaedra* 1247–80 collecting the dismembered remains of Hippolytus. Similarly, Penelope had become a commonplace for patient domesticity and probity; for example, Juvenal 2.56 contrasts the Trojan War era heroine weaving with the effeminacy of men of his own times spinning and weaving.<sup>94</sup>

### *Heliades*

The daughters of the sun, sisters of Phaëthon, whose mourning for their brother and transformation, was proverbial, are the subject of this play. Quotes from the play survive largely as lexical oddities around the motif of mourning, so the τρόπον ... γόων of the women of Adria (*Anekdotia Bekkeri* 1.346.10 = fr. 71 Sommerstein), and a flow more abundant than a fountain (fr. 72 Sommerstein = Athenaeus 10.424D on ladles). To these two might possibly be added a comparison with the mourning of the Pleiades, daughters of Atlas, where Athenaeus (11.491A = *adespota* fr. 312 Sommerstein) glosses Aeschylus' description of them as "wingless" (ἄπτεροι) deriving their name from the word for a variety of pigeon (πελειάς).<sup>95</sup> Clement of Alexandria (second half of the second century CE) must have known the play well because he connected a passage from it to Heraclitus' conception of the divine that Zeus represents the elemental properties of the *cosmos*.<sup>96</sup>

### *Phrygians*

Third play of a trilogy on Achilles, it followed closely the last book of the *Iliad*, hence its alternate title, *Ransoming of Hector*. The few fragments of a play with the same title by Ennius indicate how much the scene reflected Roman

93 Podlecki 2005, 16–7; Sommerstein 2008, 178–81 (with other citations). Olson 2006, 95 n. 129 considers this fragment and fr. 179 Sommerstein to be satiric but hesitates to assign it to the *Ostologoi*. That the following quotation in Athenaeus (1.17D) is from a satiric fragment of Sophocles has no bearing on the *Ostologoi*. What links those two plays and the succeeding passage from the comic poet Eupolis (fr. 385) is the chamber pots on stage. One example each from a tragedy, satyr drama, and comedy seems plausible. Martano, Matelli and Mirhady 2012, 266–7 view this fragment and also fr. 309 Sommerstein (= Athenaeus 9.375E) in light of the development of tragedy from satyr drama.

94 See Peskowitz 1997, 6–7.

95 As against πλέω (*LSJK*). Fr. 70 Sommerstein is quoted by Clement of Alexandria as a type of prayer formula in which the name of the divinity is repeated often.

96 Irby-Massey 2008, 134.

aesthetics and values.<sup>97</sup> Book 2 of Athenaeus is largely on fruits and section 51C examines mulberries (Συκάμινα) and notes that in the *Phrygians* Aeschylus described Hector as softer than a black mulberry (πεπαίτερος μόρων; fr. 264 Sommerstein). In Sophocles' *Prophets* (*TrGF* 395), the same story as Euripides' *Polydius*, the progression of colours of the mulberry (μόρον) represents stages of life and hence here suggests death.<sup>98</sup>

### *Cretan Women*

Μόρος is used generically of berries in the next example in the *Deipnosophistae* 2.51C citing fr. 116 Sommerstein which Athenaeus states was a reference to the blackberry (τῆς βάτου)<sup>99</sup> presumably on the basis of text that he did not quote:

λευκοῖς τε γὰρ μόροισι καὶ μελαγχίμοις  
καὶ μιλοπρέπτοις βρίθεται ταύτοῦ χρόνου

with white berries and black and bright red it hangs at the same time

Comparison once again with Sophocles' *Prophets* (fr. 395 *TrGF*) shows that Athenaeus reflects on mulberries metaphorically quoting the first two lines, starting with πρῶτον but omitting the third line in Sophocles which makes the poet's intent clear (τέλος δὲ γήρας ...). The plot of the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides is the story of how Polydius secured his freedom from Crete and Minos through resurrection of Glaucos.

### *Palamedes*

Book 1, for reasons that should be apparent, looks at dining, and particularly in aristocratic contexts. Early in the discussion Athenaeus and his guest consider whether the Greeks had three or four meals—one notes with genial good humour that the discussion has the feel of trying to assign plays to their proper trilogy-satyr drama and fixing their order. *Hesperisma*, for the evening meal, seems obvious, and *deipnon* is similarly the finishing satyr play to a long day. The question is whether *akratisma*, which Athenaeus derives as

97 See, e.g., Davis 2015, 152.

98 This would be consonant with Epicharmus, comic contemporary of Aeschylus, fr 207. That the Sicilian Epicharmus knew of Aeschylus is proven by a reference to Aeschylus in fr. 214.

99 Some confusion admits: τὸ βάτον in Diodorus Siculus 1.34 is the “blackberry” while ἡ βάτος is the “raspberry” Theophrastus *HP* 3.18.4.



dunking bread upon rising in unmixed wine, and *ariston* are two words for the same meal or two different meals, and which came first. Aeschylus (fr. 182 Sommerstein) does not add clarity: in the military context of the *Palamedes* he proposes three meals, namely *ariston*, *deipnon*, and thirdly *dorpnon*. As so often in Athenaeus, the discussions present views but resist coming to agreed conclusions.

### *Phineus*

Book 10 in Athenaeus considers simplicity and moderation (with more examples and more evocative ones of their opposites) at table. The subject shifts to manners (10.421A): the inconsiderateness of Alexandrians towards servers and belligerence towards one another at dinner parties leads the discussion. There follows a stream of quotations of playwrights from numerous periods and places in which dining is tantamount to combat. It was inevitable that Aeschylus' *Phineus* (fr. 258 Sommerstein) would be recalled. Sommerstein's suggestion<sup>100</sup> that *Phineus* (472 BCE) followed by *Persians*, *Glaucus of Potniae*, and *Prometheus Pyrphoros* are to be read in light of both the Syracusan naval victory at Himera and the wrecking of Xerxes' fleet make the reference in Athenaeus doubly appropriate.

### *Heralds (dub.)*<sup>101</sup>

Book 9 in Athenaeus is given over to notes on food and animals. In an extended discussion of pigs, piglets, sows, and eating/not-eating pork, introduced with the lemma Δέλφαξ (9.374D–383F),<sup>102</sup> Athenaeus argues that the distinction among sows that had given birth (*delfax*, *huos*), fattened hogs (*sus*), and male piglets (*choiros*) has been lost and cites three passages consecutively (9.375D–E) from the same scene of a satyr play of Aeschylus to show that pigs were treasured more if fattened (fr. 309 Sommerstein) and white (fr. 310 Sommerstein). Athenaeus, citing Chamaeleon's commentary on Aeschylus (fr. 39 Wehrli), adds that sacrificing the piglet (χοῖρος) of a sow (ῥός) that had done much damage to the house gave a certain extra pleasure to the meal (fr. 311 Sommerstein).<sup>103</sup> Sommerstein speculates no further than that the sow

<sup>100</sup> Sommerstein 2008, 259 with his more detailed study in 2012.

<sup>101</sup> So Droysen, cited by Sommerstein 2008, 299 (= *adespota* frs. 309–11) who adds *Lion* as a possibility.

<sup>102</sup> Most of 9.376F through 383F, however, is a long digression on cooks in comedy. 384A introduces goose (χῆν) as his next subject.

<sup>103</sup> Scholars, such as Monsman 2006, 1–27, writing on Charles Lamb's "A Dissertation on Roast Pig" (1823), a response to Shelley's *apologia* for vegetarianism (1821), have noted

is being punished with the sacrifice of her piglet.<sup>104</sup> The context in Athenaeus, however, is on taste of different types of pigs and different kinds of preparation.

### *Assesment of Aeschylus in Plutarch and Athenaeus*

As with Plutarch, there is no consistent pattern in what subjects in Aeschylus interested Athenaeus: the power of Aphrodite, willow crowns, choral movements, a game like bocci with sexual overtones, excessive behaviours, the significance of colours of berries, names for meals, dinner as combat, and fattened pigs. Like Plutarch, the list looks idiosyncratic and not filled with well-worn subjects for which there might have been source books. What one takes away from an examination of the fragments of Aeschylus in Plutarch and Athenaeus is that Aeschylus has been mined as a source of aphorisms for their points under discussion. The reputation of Aeschylus, however, had to have been substantial or they would not have looked to his works for validation. Neither Plutarch nor Athenaeus thought the plays needed any kind of explanation: this certainly must mean that Plutarch and Athenaeus assumed that their readers would know the plays. The ratio of quotations of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides conforms to their comparative reputations in antiquity; the significantly higher number of citations from Aeschylus' satyr drama as opposed to Sophocles and Euripides conforms, again, to the prevalent ancient ranking.

### *References in Papyri*

Papyri are of extreme significance for assessing the reputation of Aeschylus in the middle part of the Roman Empire. Nearly all are dated to the second century CE<sup>105</sup> and the majority of papyri of Aeschylus preserve fragments of satyr plays. Further, a link has been drawn to a revival of interest in Aeschylus and the Second Sophistic, to which papyri remains lend credence.<sup>106</sup> The fragments as preserved do not divide themselves into "prologues," "monologues," "herald speeches," or "choral odes," that is, categories representing what is known of collections of excerpts.<sup>107</sup> Papyri thus would seem to be unmoderated

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influence from Pliny the Elder, Petronius, and Apicius; this passage in Athenaeus has been overlooked but seems much more to the point.

104 Sommerstein 2008, 299.

105 The exceptions are POxy 2245, POxy 2256, an PHeid GR 1.185, all of which are early third century CE, or possibly end of second century CE.

Sadly, web-sources for the fragments and papyri of Aeschylus are largely unreliable. Where one should start is the Leuven Database of Ancient Books (LDAB): papyri are inventoried on the trismegistos site ([www.trismegistos.org](http://www.trismegistos.org)).

106 Rosenmeyer 1982, 19 but now Nervegna 2014, 175.

107 Fr 451q Sommerstein (=POxy 2256 fr. 71), possibly from *Women of Salamis*, stands out as an exception.

copies of what must originally have been entire scripts.<sup>108</sup> Decisive inscriptional evidence of continuing performance of satyr drama at least through the second century CE has now been collected; statues and mosaics from theatres and their environs pushes the probability of performance into the fifth century.<sup>109</sup> As the most highly regarded writer of satyr drama, one would expect that Aeschylus continued to find audiences especially, given the parallel popularity of the comic genres of mime, pantomime and farce in the Roman Empire.<sup>110</sup>

It is not surprising that so many of the papyri would be satyr plays given Aeschylus' high reputation in this genre in the Roman Empire. Pausanias, for example, when visiting Phleius, west of Corinth and due south of Sicyon, mentions (2.13.6–7):

ἐνταῦθά ἐστι καὶ Ἀριστίου μνήμα τοῦ Πρατίνου· τούτῳ τῷ Ἀριστίᾳ  
σάτυροι καὶ Πρατίναι τῷ πατρὶ ἐῖσι πεποιημένοι πλὴν τῶν Αἰσχύλου  
δοκιμώτατοι.

Here is the monument of Aristias, son of Pratinas. As regards Aristias and his father Pratinas their satyr plays are generally the most highly regarded, except for those of Aeschylus.

Diogenes Laertius *Lives of the Philosophers* 2.133 on Menedemus adds:

μάλιστα δὲ πάντων Ὀμήρῳ προσεῖχεν· εἶτα καὶ τοῖς μελικοῖς·  
ἔπειτα Σοφοκλεῖ· καὶ δὴ καὶ Ἀχαιῶι, ὥιπερ καὶ τὸ δευτερεῖον  
ἐν τοῖς Σατύροις, Αἰσχύλῳ δὲ τὸ πρωτεῖον ἀπεδίδου.

[Menedemus] first and foremost paid attention to Homer; then also to the lyric poets; then to Sophocles; and next to Achaëus, giving him second in satyr plays, first to Aeschylus.

108 Sommerstein 2008, 333 states that “[t]he great majority of surviving Aeschylean papyri were written in the second century by one single scribe.” Since the fragments of POxy 2251 and POxy 2256, numbered as frs. 451a–q Radt, encompass tragedies and satyr dramas, and dialogue plus odes, it would argue for an *editio quae supersunt* in Egypt during the high Empire.

109 See Skotheim on inscriptions and Harrison on statues and mosaics in Harrison forthcoming 2018.

110 See esp. Wyles 2013, 181–98; Petrides 2013, 433–50; Hall 2013, 451–76; Zanolini 2014; and Baertschi 2015, 171–95.

Papyri preserving fragments of satyr dramas have been adduced above for the *Theoroi/Isthmiastae* (POxy 2250; nearly 100 lines).<sup>111</sup> Forty-seven whole and partial lines of the Dike-play are preserved (POxy 2256) in another papyrus. Sommerstein<sup>112</sup> does not agree with identification of the fragments as a tragedy but neither does he confirm it as a satyr drama. The feel of the lines spoken by Dike is familiar from Aristophanes' *Peace* (421 BCE) and one is inclined especially to consider this a satyr drama since Dike addresses the chorus leader.<sup>113</sup> Silenus often has a speaking role in satyr drama as head of the chorus or on his own and so he may be the unnamed interlocutor. More important, I think, and over-looked is that all of the lines are assigned to Dike but belong to several different speeches. On the basis of comparison with POxy 4546 (Euripides' *Alkestis*),<sup>114</sup> one could conclude that the fragments of the Dike-drama are a rehearsal script, and thus indicate that satyr drama continued to be performed into at least the second-century CE.

The *Nethaulers* (*Dictuoulci*) is known almost entirely in thirty-five complete or nearly complete lines from six different papyri. Two long fragments survive: the first (*PSI* 1209) is a series of mostly single line exchanges that commence the play between a net-fisherman (Δίκτυς) who has just snagged the chest, in which Danaë and Perseus had been set afloat, while another character, presumably on shore and hence the short, shouted words, is described with a more generic name for fisherman (Ἀλιεύς). This character may, or may not, be Silenus, who thus opens the dialogue in this play before the entry of the satyr chorus, as he does also in Euripides' *Cyclops*.<sup>115</sup> Two shorter fragments seem to describe the effort of the satyrs in trying to drag the net on shore (fr 46c Sommerstein = POxy 2256 fr. 72)<sup>116</sup> and Danaë's dawning horror about the intentions of the satyrs

111 See above also for *Prometheus Pyrkaeos* (POxy 2245 fr. 1–12).

Other satyr dramas for which there are papyrus fragments are: *Glaucus Pontius* (POxy 2255 fr 12; POxy 2159) and *Leon* (POxy 2256 fr. 59–60).

112 Sommerstein's reservation 2008, 277 that the lines "contain no trace of the amorality we expect from satyrs" would carry more weight if more of the play was preserved. Podlecki 2005, 15–6 cites the evidence but then demurs with "[t]here are intriguing puzzles that await convincing solution." See also Smith, this volume.

113 More or less contemporary with this papyrus, Lucian notes Aristophanes' *Peace* in his *Icaromenippus*; see Slater 2016, 19.

114 Marshall 2004.

115 For the entry of the satyr chorus in the *Cyclops* from the hills after that of Silenus, who had begun drinking with the intention of not sharing it with the younger satyrs, see Harrison 2005, 237–8.

116 This has its parallel in how the satyrs promise to help Odysseus blind Polyphemus and then melt away feigning injuries in the *Cyclops*; see Harrison 2005, 245–7.

(POxy 2161). The longest passage is a continuation of POxy 2161 in which Silenus sings a lyric to Perseus, promising to take care of him, but interlaces it with directions to the satyrs attempting to keep Dictys from rescuing Danaë from him.<sup>117</sup> It is hard to interpret, however, since the reconstructions in Sommerstein and in Podlecki differ markedly from one another not just in reconstruction of the text but in assignation of speakers.<sup>118</sup>

Tragedies are not as well represented as satyr drama in the papyri,<sup>119</sup> even after assigning three fragments (POxy 2164 frs. 1–3 = 220 a-c Sommerstein = 168, 168a, 168b *TrGF*) to the *Semele* (so Sommerstein) and not to the satyr play *Wool Carders* (*Xantriae*),<sup>120</sup> with which Podlecki is in agreement.<sup>121</sup> Of Aeschylus' *Wool Carders*, additional quotations survive from three different sources.<sup>122</sup> A reference by Plato (*Republic* 381D) guarantees the antiquity of the lines; citation of the *Wool Carders* by Galen (who knew both plays) and Pollux shows that the plays remained available into the Roman Empire. Lyssa appears on stage (fr. 169 Sommerstein) in *Wool Carders* as she does also in Euripides' *Herakles*. The substitution of Hera in Seneca's *Hercules*, and prominently in the prologue, shows the distance Roman tragedy travelled from its Greek models.<sup>123</sup>

117 Other fragments of this play are POxy 2255 frs. 20 and 21.

118 Podlecki 2005, 10–11 and Sommerstein 2008, 48–63.

119 Papyri for tragedies discussed above include: The PVitelli-Norsa = *PSI* 1211 = *adespota* 284 *TrGF*) might belong to the *Myrmidons*, as more securely *PSI* 1472 (= fr. 132b Sommerstein) and *PSI* 1211 (= fr. 132c Sommerstein).

120 One view is that the dismemberment of Pentheus is compared to carding wool.

121 Podlecki 2005, 15 and Sommerstein 2008, 224–9. The confusion is ancient: Plato Comicus wrote a *Xanrtiae* or *Cercopes*, comic by its double title and *Cercopes* is the title of a lost satyr play by Aeschylus. The *Semele* itself has a double title (ΣΕΜΕΛΗ Η ΥΔΡΟΦΟΡΟΙ) that in other circumstances would invite suspicion; on comic nature of double titles, see e.g. Storey 2005, 201–18.

122 The *scholium* that assigns fr. 220a lines 16–7 Sommerstein to Aeschylus' *Wool Carders* is notoriously unreliable (Sommerstein 2008, 226 with esp. n. 1). Deities sometimes do come on stage (as distinct from *ex machina*) but the appearance of Hera (fr. 220 a 16–30) in the guise of a beggar is unique in tragedy but not without parallel in other genres. One thinks instantly of Athena in Homer and Venus in Vergil, for example.

123 Of other tragedies, only one has a secure identification: *Glaucus Potniae* (POxy 2160 fr. 7). For the most part tragic fragments of Aeschylus await further evidence, such as *The Women of Aetna*, produced in Sicily shortly after the foundation of a city Herington 1972, 59–64 by that name for which there is a hypothesis (POxy 2257) and two possible fragments, POxy 2256 fr. 9 (= fr. *adespota* 281 *TrGF*) and POxy 2256 fr. 91 (= fr. *adespota* 282 *TrGF*), once advocated by Fraenkel. Sommerstein does not accept the assignation of these fragments to this play nor does he print POxy 2253 (= fr. *adespota* 283 *TrGF*), a prayer of the troops at Troy to Zeus, or POxy 2256 fr. 71 (= fr. *adespota* 284 *TrGF*), a choral ode of generals

### Epic, *Praetexta* and Tragedy

This section highlights three different imperial genres to explore three distinct aspects of the reputation of Aeschylus during the Roman Empire in the Latin west. For Latin writers of the Roman Empire, sources for inspiration and imitation must have been an embarrassment of riches. Stories from the Trojan cycle were available in versions known from Greek epic, Greek tragedy, Greek comedy, satyr drama, elegiac, and lyric, romance and novel, and even from historians who were inclined to treat Agamemnon and Achilles, and other heroes, as echoes of real men and events. Philosophers cooked their own renditions of the tales. Allegorical interpretations started appearing at least as early as the Hellenistic period and are perhaps, for the purpose of this essay, best represented by the Greek *rhetor*, Annaeus Cornutus, teacher to Lucan,<sup>124</sup> Persius, and Nero. The Roman side had Republican tragedy, Virgilian and Ovidian epic, and by the middle of the first century CE, Latin translations of Greek epic, such as the *Ilias latina*, had begun to appear.

### Septem and the Thebaid

Statius' *Thebaid* is an epic and so in structure conforms to Virgilian practice. Individual scenes and motifs, not surprisingly, have epic pedigrees: Tissiphone infecting madness into Polynices and Eteocles at the request of Oedipus at the beginning of the *Thebaid*, for example, looks back to Allecto (*Aeneid* 7).<sup>125</sup> When the source is dramatic,<sup>126</sup> it is more likely to be Lyssa from Seneca's *Hercules Furens* or Megaera from the start of the *Thyestes* than comparable

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conniving with Odysseus, to the lost *Iphigeneia*. POxy 2251 (= fr. *Adespota* 280 TrGF) was once thought to belong to the *Egyptians* of the Danaid trilogy (produced 463 BC). So, too, PLefebvre (fr. 285 TrGF) has been claimed for the *Heracleidae*, *Chamber Makers* POxy 2251 (= fr. 78a TrGF = fr. 451l Sommerstein). *Cretan Women* POxy 2251 (= fr. 451h Sommerstein).

124 In contrast to Statius, Lucan's historical epic on civil war does not take advantage of the possibility of imitation from Aeschylus. Narducci 2004, 12 adduces only one parallel (*Pharsalia* 2.114 and *Septem* 674–5). Lucan's invention of a visit to Troy by Caesar (9. 964–99; Gergö 2012, 51–2) does not capitalize on his literary predecessors; see, esp., Rossi 2001.

125 See Hershkowitz 1994 and 1995. This makes Oedipus inheritor of the role of Juno at the start of the *Aeneid* and Seneca's *Hercules Furens*. The bull imagery, so Hershkowitz 1994, 125–8, more likely comes from Lucan, Book 2 (on Pompey) or perhaps Accius, ultimate source of the bull in Seneca's *Phaedra* (Erasmus 2015, 28–38).

126 Statius was conscious of the performative and theatrical qualities of his work; see, esp., Markus 2003, 440–3, 453–60, 463–70 and Boyle 2003, 50–3, specifically on the *Thebaid*.

figures from Aeschylus or even Sophocles or Euripides.<sup>127</sup> With the appearance of Theseus and his killing of Creon,<sup>128</sup> Statius has an opportunity for closure that is denied Aeschylus' *Septem*;<sup>129</sup> Statius' Theseus instead looks to Theseus in Seneca's *Hercules Furens* who is initially in essence a *nuntius* (641–829) describing Hercules' descent to the underworld. He remains on stage largely a *muta persona*, supporting Amphytrion in talking Hercules back to lucidity at play's end (compare Theseus' role in Euripides' *Herakles*) but, similar to Theseus' intervention at the close of Statius *Thebaid* 12.782–819, is asked by Hercules to lend support (1335) and speaks final lines of Seneca's play (1341–4).

When there are Aeschylean resonances in the *Thebaid* they are on the whole disparate and sporadic. The catalogue of Argive heroes in Statius has many similarities with the report of the scout to the chorus at *Septem* 375–652. Where Aeschylus makes a point of stating that the shield boss of Amphiarus (Septem 591–4) was in reserve to emphasize that he did not wish merely to seem ἄριστος, Statius (4.216–8) emphasizes the incongruity between being a priest of Apollo and waging war.<sup>130</sup> Word-for-word importations are rare; rather, Statius is more likely to play off of Aeschylus, transforming Amphiarus' μαχώμεθ' (*Septem* 589) into *ibimus* (*Thebaid* 4.647) fraught with foreknowledge of his death.<sup>131</sup>

The scout (*Septem* 422–36) describes the size and arrogance of Capaneus, claiming that not even Zeus can stop him. The scout wonders who can oppose Capaneus, but Eteocles (437–51) sees that Capaneus' blasphemy and intransigence will be his undoing, remaining blind to his own. In Statius, Capaneus combines also facets of Parthenopaeus<sup>132</sup> and Tydeus in Aeschylus and is heavily indebted also to Virgil's Mezentius.<sup>133</sup>

127 For which, see Mazzoli 2002, 155–6. The scout at *Septem* 63–64 puts it down to the πνοάς / ἄρεως, largely followed by Sophocles and Euripides.

128 Statius' Theseus is more violent than Aeschylus. Where Aeschylus in the *Eleusinoi* (Sommerstein 2008, 56–7) prevails to secure the bodies of the Seven through negotiation, Statius follows Euripides in a violent recapturing of the corpses; see Criado 2015, 294–5.

129 On the ending in Statius' *Thebaid*, see Braund 1996. In writing on what she considers three short (and unsatisfying) extensions to the conclusion in Statius she does not draw a parallel to controversies over the ending of Aeschylus' *Septem*.

130 Seo 2013, 151.

131 "Modulation," so Fantham 2006, 160, on this passage.

132 For characteristics of Aeschylus' Parthenopaeus (*Septem* 536–49 in the *OCT*) that are transferred to Statian Capaneus, see, esp, Lovatt 2005, 62–3.

133 *Thebaid* 4.165–77 and 7.623–4. Fantham 2006, 159 notes also Statius' giving him prophetic powers (with proviso 157 n. 29) that allow him to refute accusations of cowardice; see also, Leigh 2006, 217–42.

### **Persians and the Octavia**

The ps-Senecan *Octavia* is an example of a sustained imitation of Aeschylus. Although the dramatist himself references directly lines of literary descent of Octavia from *Electra* (59) and *Iphigeneia at Tauris* (975) the one surviving Latin historical drama looks for inspiration most often from the one surviving Greek historical drama, Aeschylus' *Persians*. The similarities are not difficult to find: a chorus of elders speaks the first 158 lines of Aeschylus' play and enter into dialogue with the queen, Atossa. A similar chorus of old men interacts in several scenes with Octavia and are as sympathetic to Octavia as the chorus in the *Persians* is to Atossa. The chorus laments the delusion of Xerxes (*Pers.* 111) that in their view will lead the country to disaster, a view shared by the chorus in the *Octavia*, which takes part in the riot that pulls down statues of Poppaea, pregnant mistress of Nero, and of Nero himself (780–805). To the chorus *virtus* (290) is *quondam ... fuit* (290–1), not current, and the *nomen / Caesaris* (335–6) is *amens* (336). In both *Persians* (852–908) and *Octavia* (292–308 and 877–98) the choruses compare prior, better times to the ones in which they live with inexperienced, head-strong young rulers.<sup>134</sup>

Octavia bears striking similarities to Atossa in Aeschylus, but there are similarities with Poppaea as well. Both have dreams, or rather nightmares: Poppaea recounts seeing Roman matrons beating their breasts (719–20) in whose midst was Agrippina (721). The earth opened up and Poppaea on her bed spiraled to the underworld where she encountered Crispinus, her prior husband (729–31). Nero appears to slit his throat (733), although Crispinus is already dead. Atossa reports numerous dreams (176) since the departure of Xerxes but was most troubled by the one of the prior night in which two women appeared, one dressed in Doric style and the other Ionian (181–3). The women fall to quarreling and, although Xerxes yokes them to his chariot, the one in Doric dress breaks free and over-turns the chariot. In her dream, Darius, the dead father of Xerxes appears (198) as the dead mother of Nero appears, presumably to Poppaea. Atossa's dream then tacks to an eagle flying for refuge at an altar of Apollo chased by a hawk (205–11). In both instances, the response to the dream omen is to order and perform propitiary sacrifices. The *nutrix* to Poppaea does not object to the sacrifices but contorts a positive interpretation (740–55) just as the chorus in *Persians* (215–25) assigns a harmless meaning and assures Atossa that her sacrifices will placate the gods. The scene between the chorus

134 Although the aristocratic tradition is hostile to Xerxes and Nero, both kept devoted followers even after their deaths: if Xerxes lost the European footholds of his father he retained the much wealthier Asiatic provinces; similarly false-Neros bedeviled the Flavians and inscriptions flattering to Nero survive.



and Atossa continues until she is interrupted by the messenger at 249 who reports the disaster at Salamis. Similarly the scene between Poppaea and the nurse was ended by the report of the riot.

The appearances of the ghost of Agrippina and the ghost of Darius have significant differences but those differences should not obscure the central place each holds in its play and the rarity of willing appearance of deceased parents in plays, nor the degree to which Agrippina pays homage to her Aeschylean predecessor.<sup>135</sup> Agrippina's short scene (592–645) is, possibly, the dream that Poppaea reports in the next scene, compressing the action of the play over two days, not three,<sup>136</sup> while the ghost of Darius remains on stage from 681 through 842, ignorant of the result at Salamis (681–93) but prophetic of the coming defeat at Plateia (800–22).<sup>137</sup> Darius prepares the stage for the entrance of Xerxes (908), as Poppaea appears on stage (712) shortly after Agrippina. Xerxes enters in tatters and much is made of his costume. Aeschylus was noted in antiquity for his care in costumes and the *Persians* especially offers opportunities for lavish dress contrasted with Xerxes' rags,<sup>138</sup> just as the *Octavia* allows for contrast between the conservative dress of the partisans of Octavia with the young, trendy supporters of Poppaea. Just like Xerxes, the chorus which took part in the riot re-appears with ripped and bloodied clothing, having been suppressed by the Praefect (846–76).

### *Seneca's Plays and the Unknown Aeschylus*<sup>139</sup>

A relationship between plays of Aeschylus surviving only in fragments and Seneca is too risky to assert but equally so to dismiss out of hand.<sup>140</sup> Seneca's *Oedipus* embraced more than just Sophocles: beyond what can be demonstrated for Aeschylus' *Septem* one should be mindful that it was once part of a tetralogy with plays also on *Laius*, *Oedipus*, and its satyr drama, *Sphinx*, all of which could have been available to Seneca. Aeschylus' *Eleusinoi*, on the burial of the

135 Appearance of Furies is far more common. Ghosts do not always appear willingly: the soldier in the Manto scene in Seneca's *Oedipus* is conjured by extipacy and Tantalus has to be forced by a Fury. Only Thyestes (an uncle and not a parent) appears at the beginning of Seneca's *Agamemnon* to encompass the death of his nephew at his moment of triumph.

136 As argued by Harrison 2003 (as against Ferri 2003, 61) and 2014, 522; Boyle 2008, lix.

137 Agrippina is as prophetic of the future, but one that projects her desire for vengeance.

138 See, esp., Podlecki 2013, 132–3 and 136–7.

139 Only plays by Aeschylus for which there are surviving fragments are mentioned here. Plays known only by title are ignored unless they are part of a tetralogy in which there are substantial remains of its fellow productions.

140 The influence of Republican tragedies on imperial drama presents a parallel case; cp. the contributors to Harrison ed. 2015.

Seven at Eleusis, and his *Epigoni*, would likely have contained references to the back-story. In the case of Seneca's *Medea*, a line of descent from Sophocles' *Medea* through Accius' *Medea sive Argonautae* to Ovid has been claimed<sup>141</sup> and so it might not seem far-fetched that one or another of the plays in Aeschylus' Argonaut tetralogy (*Argo* or *the Oarsmen*, *Lemnian Women*, *Hypsipyle*, satyr-drama *Cabiri*) was known to Seneca.<sup>142</sup>

Individual lines from Seneca's plays reflect Aeschylean sentiment, even if there is not always a *locus certus* in his plays such as the pronouncement that death is preferable to an untenable life (βίου πονηροῦ θάνατος εὐκλεέστερος; *Ixion* fr. 90 Sommerstein). Lyssa in *Wool-Carders* (fr. 169 Sommerstein) describes her 'prick of madness' (κέντημα λύσσα) similar to the opening of the *Thyestes*<sup>143</sup> and fr. 170 from the same play uses language close to Hercules' description of the loss of light at the onset of his madness (*Hercules Furens* 939–40). Aeschylus' *Wool-Carders* fr. 171 on burning torches has a parallel in the *facem | thalamis scelestis* (594–5) in the *Octavia*.<sup>144</sup> The choral ode from the *Heracleidae* of Aeschylus (fr. 74) preserves ten lines on the exploits of Hercules. The chorus (524–91), just before the entry of Hercules on stage sings of some of his deeds, but the better parallel is the numerous times Hercules engages in special pleading to assume his promised divinity (*Hercules Oetaeus* 1131–50, 1179–1206, 1232–78, 1359–95). *Heracleidae* fr. 73a and 75b raise the possibility that Hercules appeared to his children *ex machina* as he does at the end of the *Hercules Oetaeus* (1940–82).

Even in instances where there is not similar language there are comparable situations that could possibly have been suggestive. Aeschylus' *Perrhaebian Women*, for example, is about the attempt of Ixion to avoid paying bride gifts by murdering his father-in-law. A bride, a murderous spouse, and material greed drive the *Thyestes*; Hercules kills the family of Iole when she is not handed over to him as agreed in the *Hercules Oetaeus*. The mourning of the *Trojan Women* is the mourning of all women<sup>145</sup> and so one might have enjoyed the opportunity to compare it with Aeschylus' *Thracian Women*, who witnessed the death of Ajax—Hecuba speaks several times in Seneca about the death of Priam. Hippolytus, as positioned in Seneca's *Phaedra*, has clear differences with Euripides' *Hippolytus*; fragments 241 Sommerstein and 243 Sommerstein from

141 Erasmio 2015, 29. Goldberg 2014, 639 traces a similar trajectory from Euripides' *Medea* to Ennius' *Medea exul* to Seneca.

142 A *Phineus* by Aeschylus is also known.

143 Compare also the context at *Hercules Furens* 982–4.

144 One should read with it the deceased Claudius who has been turned by Agrippina into virtually a Fury (*Erinyes*, 619) with *flamisque vultus noxios coniunx petit*, 615).

145 See Raby 2000, 173–95 but now more recently Dutsch-Bachvarova-Suter edd. 2016.

Aeschylus' *Archeresses* have their parallel in the opening speech of Hippolytus in Seneca in the character of Actaeon.<sup>146</sup> All of these fragments which seem to move in parallel with Seneca raise enticing possibilities that there would be so much more if more of Aeschylus survived.

### *Agamemnon in the Roman Empire*

#### *Seneca*

It has been the instinct of current scholarship on Seneca's plays to stress the differences with his Greek models: Phaedra, Oedipus, Andromache, Antigone, Atreus and, significant for this volume, Clytemnestra have all traded πρόσωπα for renovated Roman *personae*.<sup>147</sup> This is no more apparent than in the *Cambridge Companion to Seneca* in which Aeschylus is mentioned only once, and in that relegated to a footnote.<sup>148</sup> *Brill's Companion to Seneca* finds very little Greek even in its article on "Greek and Roman Elements in Seneca"<sup>149</sup> and its contribution on the "Agamemnon" uses a single Greek word once—ὑβρις—which does not, in fact, occur in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*.<sup>150</sup> Schiesaro is speaking for the current *consensus* when he begins his article on "Seneca's *Agamemnon*: the Entropy of Tragedy" in the special *Pallas* issue on Seneca with "*Agamemnon* is arguably the most experimental of all of Seneca's tragedies."<sup>151</sup>

146 There is the possibility, raised by Sommerstein 2008, 244–7, that Actaeon did intend sexual imposition, or at least interest, on Artemis if fr. 243 Sommerstein is spoken by Actaeon. The fragment of the speech of Aphrodite in the *Danaids* (fr. 44 Sommerstein) is much closer to her opening in Euripides' *Hippolytus*.

Aphrodite in Aeschylus' *Glaucus Potneius* causes him to be eaten by his own mares as Hippolytus in Seneca is torn apart by bulls at the wish of Theseus.

147 For an overview of recent scholarship, see Liapis, Panayotakis, and Harrison 2013, 17–31 in Harrison and Liapis and now Schierl 2015, 45–62 and Cowan 2015, 63–89 in Harrison on how Republican tragedy largely shaped later imperial perceptions. Phaedra: Roisman 2000, 73–86 in Harrison; Oedipus: Staley 2014, 111–24 in Aygon; Andromache: Volk 2000, 197–208 in Harrison; Antigone: Ginsberg 2015b, 199–230; Atreus: Davis 2015, 151–67 in Harrison; Clytemnestra: Hall 2005, 53–75 in Macintosh, Michelakis, Hall and Taplin.

148 Littlewood 2015, 166 n. 37 in Bartsch and Schiesaro.

149 Goldberg 2013, 639–52 in Damschen and Heil.

150 Kugelmeier 2013, 499 in Damschen and Heil. In fairness, the chorus uses the participle once (1612): Ἀγρίσθ', ὑβρίζοντ' ἐν κακοῖσιν οὐ σέβω.

151 Schiesaro 2014, 179 in Aygon. Kugelmeier 2014, 499 in a single sentence paragraph agrees with the sentiment: "It is obvious that Seneca clearly differs once again from his predecessor Aeschylus and with the latter's haughtiness-eschewing king."

*Agamemnon* was not part of the Byzantine triad of *Prometheus*, *Septem*, and *Persians* that became the basis of schools texts. Although the A-Commentary to the triad must be dated to pre-1000 CE, its scholia, and those independent of the A-commentary in the Medicean manuscript cannot be dated closely so although one can learn what was thought of individual passages in these three plays,<sup>152</sup> it is impossible even in the broadest outlines to trace development of Aeschylean criticism, particularly for the Roman Empire. Although scant, there are some papyri with remains from Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, most particularly POxy 2178.<sup>153</sup> Taken with the Pompeian graffito from Seneca, it shows that both Seneca's and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* were popularly known into the late second century CE.<sup>154</sup>

What sets the *Agamemnon* apart from the other surviving plays is that it came to be a "cipher for imperial personages."<sup>155</sup> It has been noted that Tacitus at the beginning of his *Annals* (1.3–11) has an "Aeschylean vision of the Julio-Claudian dynasty" and that he "employs the complex verbal network of the beginning of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*."<sup>156</sup> Seneca's *Agamemnon* is the earliest of his plays, conventionally dated to pre-59 CE,<sup>157</sup> and for Seneca *Agamemnon*, who is mainly a non-entity in his own play, must at least at some level represent Claudius, over-shadowed by Messalina and her adulteries.<sup>158</sup> *Agamemnon* in Seneca speaks 18 whole lines, and is interrupted by his spouse in his other 9 half-lines. It can be no accident that Aegisthus plays a much larger role in Seneca's *Agamemnon*, speaking 52 lines in the opening scene—the reverse of his appearance in Aeschylus—and another 14 at play's end when Electra is sent into exile. Clytemnestra, Cassandra, and Electra all have more lines. The play named for *Agamemnon* is a contest of wills of women, whose steeliness

152 For the date of material in the A-commentary, see Herington 1972, 28–9. The Hellenistic vs. post-Hellenistic material in the Medicean scholia is discussed on pp. 36–8.

153 See Raeburn and Thomas 2011, 72 esp. on *Agamemnon* 7–17 and 20–30.

154 *CIL 4 Suppl.* 2, 6698; Kohn 2015, 101 and Hall 2005, 64. That the graffito is on the theatre *a priori* suggests performance Harrison 2015, 143.

155 Harrison 2014a, 637–8.

156 Santoro L'Hoir 2006, 38–9.

157 That *Agamemnon* introduces Seneca's career while Aeschylus' *Oresteia* was his valedictory to Athens puts the two plays in very different contexts. For dating of Seneca's plays, Nisbet 1990 has been the standard, now eclipsed by Marshall 2014 who would entertain *Agamemnon* as pre-54 CE, possibly as early as soon after his recall.

158 As author of speeches for Nero, Seneca would have not just used his eloquence to promote the new regime but denigrate Nero's predecessor. In this way, one read of the *Agamemnon* places it close in spirit to the *Apocolocyntosis*. For Seneca at the beginning of Nero's reign, see Jones 2000.

Electra spits back at Clytemnestra in alliteration<sup>159</sup> worthy of Republican tragedy (960): *Nisi forte fallor, feminas ferrum decet* (Unless I am by chance confused, women warrant weapons).

That is not to say that the reminiscences from Aeschylus in Seneca's *Agamemnon* are not substantial and pervasive. The messenger speech in Seneca, given by Eurybates, is the longest speech in the play (421–588) and paraphrases much in 503–680 of Aeschylus (with interruptions by Clytemnestra and by the chorus).<sup>160</sup> Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* centres on revenge and the language of revenge is that of justice. Significantly, Agamemnon in his moment of triumphal entry to Mycenae (810–8) cloaks the destruction of Troy as a legal proceeding; Clytemnestra rehearses her revenge in similar language.<sup>161</sup> Seneca was a successful lawyer, politician, and courtier before playwright and so it is not surprising that his Clytemnestra elaborates on that of Aeschylus: in imposing her will on her *nutrix* (108–61) she is playing to the galleries. Her *agon* with the *nutrix* (162–202) is a powerful *suasoria* for which there can only be a short, meek reply (203–25). Aegisthus is her next target in their dialogue (226–309) with the chorus (and implicitly audience) as jury.<sup>162</sup>

### *After Seneca*

Imperial Roman art needs to be assessed cautiously as evidence for continuing presence, if not performance, of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. Although *stelai*, mosaic, and fresco are not lacking, the story of the Agamemnon had so much become part of a shared cultural currency that it is difficult to assert with confidence that any particular representation was inspired by specifically Aeschylus. In addition to puppet shows, during the Roman Empire the myth is known from pantomime, dance, recital, and singing competitions.<sup>163</sup> It is a largely unrecognized two-way street: if it might not be possible to state that a certain representation was influenced by Aeschylus, the proliferation of art forms, both performative and glyptic, opened up possibilities for Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* to thrive in unsuspected ways and places.

159 The hissing fricatives are carried not just by words in this passage starting with “f” but also a high incidence of words starting with “v”, hardened in pronunciation in the early Empire; see Paratore 1988, 331–2. The last line completes the alliteration (1012): CLYT. *Furiosa, morere*. CASS. *Veniet et vobis furor*. Apologies that syntax suffered to showcase the alliteration.

160 Baertschi 2015, 177.

161 Bakewell 2013, 155–7. On Clytemnestra as “an androgyne, a liar, an orator,” see Hall 2005, 53.

162 In this instance it is a “hung jury.” Clytemnestra's impunes Aegisthus' incestuous conception (293) which he defends as legitimate because it was Apollo's will (294). Cassandra lashes back (295–301). The chorus' response is a paeon to Apollo and Diana (310–88).

163 Hall 2005, 64–5.

Philostratus (*Imagines* 2.10) purports to recall a painting of Agamemnon at what can only be called his “last supper” among a small coterie of friends and supporters. The language, however, is that of the end of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*.<sup>164</sup> Just as one is right to suspect that Philostratus’ *Imagines* are imaginings of his own rather than actual art so, too, mention of statues in a play does not mean that they were necessarily props on stage in the original production: the *phasma* of Helen Menelaus abhors (*Agamemnon* 418–9) does not mean there was a property on stage.<sup>165</sup> Although some of the details of the fourth century fresco of Timanthes accord with the sacrifice of Iphigeneia recounted by the chorus at *Agamemnon* 192–247, the painting as it survives at Pompeii was commissioned to represent the scene from Euripides’ *Iphigeneia at Aulis*. That Aeschylus had a visual conception of the scene is clear from the details he gives: she was gagged (235–7),<sup>166</sup> her dress fell down (233–5), and her *peplos* was saffron-yellow (239). Aeschylus states that the scene was τῶς / ἐν γράφῃς (241–2). Yet, efforts to find art related specifically to this play largely disappoint.<sup>167</sup>

Earlier, Cicero in *Pro Caelio* 62 had equated Clodia with Clytemnestra, and Augustan propaganda positioned him as an avenging Orestes while Cleopatra became the new Clytemnestra.<sup>168</sup> At the end of antiquity Procopius envisioned Theodora as a Clytemnestra, making the comparison more telling by putting it in Theodora’s mouth.<sup>169</sup> In between, Lucian *True History* 3.274 read Agamemnon as a parable on the drawbacks of being a king. Plutarch was equally circumspect, quoting from the *Agamemnon* twice (265 and 848 respectively) on how nighttime could be productive (*On Being a Busybody* 521D§12) and on the healing power of reason (*Consolatio ad Apollonium* 118C§32). Nervegna, in tussling with reasons why there is not a record of performance of the *Agamemnon* during the Roman Empire, weighs Easterling’s surmise that

164 See, esp. Easterling 2005, 35–6. Banquets of philosophers in small groups was a frequent trope in imperial literature, such as Plutarch’s *Banquet of the Seven Sages* and his nine books of *Convivia*, and Gellius’ *Attic Nights*, in addition to Athenaeus.

165 As noticed by Meineck 2013, 175–7.

166 Bakewell 2013, 155.

167 The second century CE urn shown by Hall 2005, 55 is not in the catalogue of the Florence Archaeological Museum. Etruscan funereal urns depicting the slaying of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra and Aegisthus and Clytemnestra killing Agamemnon belong to the history of relations between Rome and its Etruscan subjects in the last centuries BC.

168 Hall 2005, 62, citing Champlain 2003, 297–310, who also quotes Ovid *Ars Amatoria* 2.387–408.

169 *Historia Arcana* 1. 24. 33–7 on a speech made by Theodora in CE 545; Cameron 1985, lxxii, but more recently Migdal 2012, 138.

there were revivals of the play but accidents of survival have denied the evidence to posterity.<sup>170</sup> She, in turn, offers her own answer that the *Agamemnon* was “written largely on the principle of a one-actor play” and would thus have not been of any interest to imperial actors and audiences. A third possibility is that the play had become so politically charged via Seneca to place a fully realized production of the tragedy in either Aeschylus’ Greek or Seneca’s Latin outside the cover of the ‘safe criticism’ afforded to other genres. *Agamemnon* is still there; one needs merely to move the blanket around him.<sup>171</sup>

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170 Nervegna 2014, 175; Easterling 2005, 35.

171 I dedicate this essay to the memory of Diskin Clay, whose class on Aeschylus was the first seminar I sat as a graduate student at Johns Hopkins. There were seven of us; I drew the *Agamemnon*, the beginning of my continuing fascination with this play. I should like to thank Rebecca Futo Kennedy for her enormous patience and for her comments and suggestions, they are very much appreciated; and also, as always, Jane Francis.

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# Aeschylus in Byzantium

*Christos Simelidis*

## Introduction

Aeschylus was less well known in Byzantium than Euripides and Sophocles, as indicated by the number of allusions and reminiscences attested among Byzantine authors. Already in antiquity Aeschylus was less popular than Euripides, and Aristotle in the *Poetics* has little to say about him.<sup>1</sup> Aeschylus died in 456/5 BCE and the seven plays that survived via Byzantine manuscripts were first printed by the successors of Aldus Manutius in 1518 CE. For a thousand years the fate of his text was in the hands of the Byzantines. The period between the fifth and ninth centuries CE presents us with very little information, but through the end of the Byzantine period there are signs of Aeschylus, either through manuscripts or through references, citations and allusions, even if the latter may not always suggest direct acquaintance with Aeschylus' text.

## The Schools

The growth of the Christian Church had no impact on the school curriculum, as far as classical texts are concerned. Despite some voices rejecting classical education, the views of the fourth-century Cappadocian Fathers prevailed, and classical texts continued to be read by pupils and scholars.<sup>2</sup> As is well known, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus advised Christians to read pagan literature and select what was useful, avoiding what was harmful.<sup>3</sup> Gregory

1 See Munteanu, this volume.

2 Ševčenko 1980 offers an excellent discussion of the role played by the Cappadocian Fathers in shaping the educated Byzantine's attitude towards the classics throughout Byzantium. Cf. Easterling 2003, 325.

3 See Basil's essay on the value of Greek literature (edited by Naldini 1984) and Gregory's oration 43.11 (Bernardi 1992, 136–41). Webb 2008, 67 and 71 finds that tragedy is absent from Basil's essay, where she sees an "exclusion (implicit or otherwise) of tragedy from a young man's reading list" and a "deletion of tragedy from his reading list." But two quotations from Euripides (*Hippolytus* 612 and *Rhesus* 84) and an allusion to Aeschylus, *Septem* 592 (which was missed by Webb) clearly indicate that tragedy is part of the reading list, if there is such a

of Nazianzus made this point quite emphatically, by composing thousands of classicizing Christian verses, in which he transformed traditional diction within a Christian framework, sometimes alluding even to erotic classical texts. Only those well read in a wide range of ancient Greek literature would be able to fully understand and appreciate Gregory's verses.<sup>4</sup>

Literacy was highly appreciated in Byzantium and was a prerequisite for any position in the administration of the state or church. However, the simple ability to read would not make someone a reader of Classical texts and only a small fraction of Byzantine society was able to attain the higher level of education.<sup>5</sup> At this level, the *Iliad* and selections from tragedy would be read, among other Classical works.<sup>6</sup> The inclusion of a text in the school curriculum would guarantee its survival and, indeed, the transmission of Aeschylus appears to be closely associated with education. His transmission is paralleled to that of Sophocles: seven plays survive, from which three are found in a larger number of manuscripts (often with marginal commentaries) than the rest. This suggests two stages of selections, one of seven plays and one of three, perhaps both designed for school use. The origin of these selections is unknown.<sup>7</sup> The evidence provided by quotations seems to suggest that the selection of seven perhaps occurred by the third century CE.<sup>8</sup> The selection of three, the so-called "Byzantine triad"—*Prometheus Bound*, *Seven against Thebes*, and *Persians*—may have happened by the time of Eugenius, a teacher in Constantinople in the fifth-sixth century CE. He wrote a metrical study on tragedy based on fifteen plays, which may have been a selection of nine from Euripides and three each from Aeschylus and Sophocles. The selection of three was certainly a feature of the curriculum of later Byzantine schools and this is why the "triad" is found in more than a hundred manuscripts.

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list. Basil's advice is all-inclusive (2.36–8): "we must use our best efforts and become familiar with poets and prose writers and orators and with all men from whom there is any prospect of benefit for our soul." The choice of texts discussed or alluded to by Basil was possibly suggested by what would have already been read by his nephews (and perhaps nieces), to whom the essay was addressed. See Wilson 1975, 7–8.

4 See Simelidis 2009, 30–46.

5 See Markopoulos 2008, 787.

6 Our knowledge of Byzantine education is to a considerable degree uncertain. We should not assume a standard curriculum at all times and places. The only Christian writer who was systematically studied at schools was Gregory of Nazianzus. See Wilson 1996, 18–27 and Markopoulos 2008.

7 See Reynolds and Wilson 2013, 53–4 and 256. Hägg 2010, 118 suggests that the symbolism of numbers three and seven also played a role in these selections.

8 Cf. Wartelle 1971, ch. 16.



Classical texts were mostly studied as models of Attic Greek. The Byzantines endeavoured to imitate in their writings the Athenian authors of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, but also some writers of the Second Sophistic, such as Lucian and Aristeides. Interestingly, poets were also considered a source of useful Attic diction. Despite this, it is still difficult to explain, for example, the predominance of Aristophanic text and scholia in the Suda (the tenth-century Byzantine lexicon) or the three Palaeologan commentaries on Pindar.<sup>9</sup> The schools practiced intensive reading, which focused on detailed linguistic analysis and involved memorizing sections of the texts. From scholia in the margins of the manuscripts it is evident that another classroom practice was the search for synonyms and the paraphrasing of short expressions.<sup>10</sup> Higher education was only available in large urban centers and especially in Constantinople. Women, who would often receive no education at all, would very occasionally reach higher education. When a well-educated woman wanted to write teaching materials, John Tzetzes (1115–1180/85), a schoolmaster, invoked Aeschylus to send her back to the spindle and distaff. He wrote a teaching text (*schedos*)<sup>11</sup> in iambics, which attacks this woman, but also intends to teach the technical terms of weaving (in bold in the text below):<sup>12</sup>

Ἀντὶ μὲν ἴστοῦ τὸν τόμον χερσὶ φέρεις,  
τὸν κάλαμον δ' αὖ ἀντὶ **κερκίδος**, γύναι·  
Ἑρμῇ λατρεύεις καὶ θύεις Καλλιόπῃ  
ἐν δευτέρῳ τιθεῖσα τὴν Ἀφροδίτῃν.  
τί χρήμα σὺ δρᾷς; ἀπορῶ μὰ τὰς βίβλους·  
ἄτρακτον ἀφέλισσε, μηρύου κρόκην,  
**ἡλακάτην μέτελθε καὶ μίτους πλέκε.**  
λόγοι δὲ καὶ μάθησις ἀνδράσι πρέπει.  
“μέλλει γὰρ ἀνὴρ, μὴ γυνὴ βουλευέτω”  
ὁ καλὸς Αἰσχύλος σὲ πειθέτω λέγων.

9 See Wilson 1996, 146 and Smith 1996, 394.

10 See the scholia in five Aeschylean plays edited by Smith 1976–1982. For the scholia to Aeschylus, see also Dickey 2007, 35–8 (with bibliography). For scholia revealing procedures of the classroom, see Wilson 2007, 56–7.

11 *Schedos* (“draft,” “sketch”) was a short text (in verse or prose) containing grammatical or linguistic information, often couched in wordplay and riddles. See Markopoulos 2008, 789 (with bibliography).

12 The text, entitled “Verses by Tzetzes against a woman who was writing *schedê*,” was published by Mercati 1951. For discussion see also Hunger 1978, vol. 2, 27.

Instead of a loom, you hold a book in your hands, and instead of a shuttle a reed pen, woman. You worship Hermes and you make offerings to Calliope, having put Aphrodite to a second place. What are you doing? I am at a loss, by the books! Unroll the spindle and weave the woof, work with the distaff and plait threads. Letters and learning are appropriate for men. “The man will take care (sc. of such things), the woman should not do so,” said good Aeschylus and do listen to him.<sup>13</sup>

Tzetzes also borrows from *Septem 200–1*:

μέλει γὰρ ἀνδρί· μὴ γυνή βουλευέτω,  
τᾷξωθεν· ἔνδον δ’ οὔσα μὴ βλάβῃν τίθει.

It is the man who takes care of affairs outside the house; let no woman advise in those matters. Stay indoors and do no harm!

Aeschylus’ words are used outside their context, as was always the case with such citations. These lines are part of Eteocles’ speech criticizing the words and actions of the women of the chorus.<sup>14</sup> Tzetzes changes Aeschylus’ words (μέλει γὰρ ἀνδρί ~ μέλλει γὰρ ἀνήρ) and his verse becomes elliptical both with μέλλει (for which we should understand βουλεύειν) and with the omission of Aeschylus’ τᾷξωθεν. Such a use of quotations from the ancient authorities was common in Byzantium.

Anthologies of sententious passages (*gnomai*) and memorable citations from ancient texts were compiled for use in education or as a source of material to be incorporated in letters and any other kind of text. Aeschylus is not common in such anthologies, but neither is he completely absent. An early anthology, which was especially influential in Byzantium, was that of Stobaeus (early fifth century CE), who excerpted Greek literature for the instruction of his son Septimius. Stobaeus is a major source of fragments from lost classical texts, including plays by Aeschylus. He was also a source for later Byzantine florilegia. Fr. 393 Radt, κάτοπτρον εἶδους χαλκός ἐστ’, οἶνος δὲ νοῦ (“bronze makes a mirror for the face, wine for the mind”),<sup>15</sup> transmitted by Stobaeus (3.18.12), is the only Aeschylean line included in the tenth-century *Loci Communes* of

13 Translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

14 It is likely that Aeschylus alludes here to Hector’s last words to Andromache (*Il.* 6.490–4). See Hutchinson 1985, 77.

15 The translation is by Sommerstein 2008, vol. 3, 329. The fragment is attributed to Euripides by Apostolius (9.59c), while Athenaeus (10.31) assigns it to Pittacus of Mytilene.

Pseudo-Maximus Confessor, in the chapter on drunkenness.<sup>16</sup> Two other Aeschylean lines (PV 44 and 378) found in Stobaeus are included in the gnomologium of Ioannes Georgides (c. 900).<sup>17</sup> Quotations from classical authors were often drawn from such anthologies and gnomologies and not from the original texts.

### Scribes and Scholars

The plays of the Byzantine triad are preserved, in whole or in part, in more than a hundred manuscripts dating between the late twelfth and the sixteenth centuries. Due to extensive contamination no stemmata can be drawn representing the genealogy of the MSS.<sup>18</sup> Any MS can contain the best reading either in isolation or with a few companions. There is only one MS, Laurentianus Mediceus 32.9 (M), and its apographa, which transmits all seven plays. M is dated to the middle of the tenth century and contains also the tragedies of Sophocles and Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*. It includes old scholia preserving material from the period of Alexandrian scholarship. *Suppliants* and *Libation Bearers* are only transmitted by M (and a few apographa) and, for some textually corrupt passages, it is impossible to recover what Aeschylus wrote. For *Eumenides* and small portions of *Agamemnon* we have witnesses representing a branch of the tradition independent of M. But for the greater part of *Agamemnon* M is not available and the rest of the witnesses offer the recension of Demetrius Triclinius (fl. ca. 1300–1330), whose changes have partially obscured the text.<sup>19</sup> Papyri with fragments of Aeschylus suggest, as in the case of other authors, that several of the errors found in medieval manuscripts were already present in Late Antiquity. In addition, they have confirmed that more than one ancient reading was available in Byzantium.<sup>20</sup> This means that more than one uncial manuscript was available at the time of transcription from majuscule into minuscule and, even if they were not all transliterated, their variant readings were taken into account in correcting the transliterated copy.

16 30.26/28 in the edition of Ihm 2001, 635. The sentence is also found in *Melissa*, another tenth- or eleventh-century florilegium which draws on Ps.-Maximus (see ODB, s.v. *Melissa*).

17 No. 984 and no. 1161 in Odorico 1986, 229 and 248.

18 See Dawe 1964, ch. 3.

19 West 1990, 319.

20 See, e.g., Hutchinson 1984, xlvi.

It is often difficult to establish whether a variant reading reported in a MS is a conjecture by Byzantine scholars or an actual ancient variant reading.<sup>21</sup> A better understanding of this question is important for Byzantine scholarship and would be of great help to editors in assessing these readings.<sup>22</sup> More work on the abilities of Byzantine scholars, focusing on specific scribes and scholars, their conventions, as well as their understanding of and interventions in texts, would make it easier to assess variant readings from this point of view. In addition, as far as Aeschylus is concerned, it seems that a careful collation of all available manuscripts is likely to shed light on such scribal and scholarly abilities by revealing more modern conjectures that were anticipated by medieval scholars.<sup>23</sup> Modern scholars often seem to allow for two incompatible views: a very thin tradition, with a very limited number of independent witnesses throughout Byzantium and, at the same time, a significant number of variant readings which they assign to the ancient tradition, because they consider them to be of a different kind than what would be expected from Byzantine scholars. To make sense of this situation, Hartmut Erbse argued for a plurality of sources available at the time of the transliteration.<sup>24</sup> But, in the case of *Suppliants*, for example, H. Friis Johansen and Edward W. Whittle “doubted whether more than one source was available even at that time.” However, they sometimes refer to “a different source” in order to explain the origins of several variants found in the margins of M (i.e., those which they do not consider conjectures by the corrector).<sup>25</sup>

A special category of variant readings are those written in the margin and marked by gamma and rho (*gr*), abbreviating *graphetai* (“it is written”). As far

21 Cf. Dawe 1964, 44 and see, e.g., Friis Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 1, 69 (with n. 42) and West 1990, 356 on the improved readings of Parisinus gr. 2886, written by Arsenius of Monembasia (Aristobulus Apostolides, ca. 1468–1535).

22 See, e.g., Fraenkel 1950, 2 (on *Ag.* 1127).

23 This is clearly indicated by the recent work of Matteo Tauber on *Prometheus* (see Tauber 2012, 5). E.g., M. L. West’s tentative conjecture πάντεχρον (*PV* 7) is anticipated by Vaticanus graecus 1892 (15th-century) and Johannes Minckwitz’s ἄλᾶδν <φέρεται> (*PV* 550) by Romanus Vallicellanus B 70 (ca. 1320), in which the *Prometheus* portion was written by John Catrares. On the latter see also Tauber 2013, who is inclined to consider φέρεται a conjecture of Catrares. For other interesting conjectures in the same manuscript see West 1990, 355 n. 1.

24 Erbse 1961, 274.

25 Friis Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 1, 57–66, esp. 65. The anonymous corrector of M is described as “a man of generally very sound judgement and laudable honesty but with no remarkable critical ability and far from being infallible as a palaeographer.”

as these variants in M are concerned, Friis Johansen and Whittle argue that the ones on *Suppliants* look like conjectures that could have been made by the reviser himself, but since he has used *oimai* on other occasions, *oimai* should then indicate his own conjectures and *gr* the variants that he found elsewhere. However, as Nigel Wilson has shown, *gr* does not necessarily stand for *grapheetai*, indicating a variant reading, but can also stand for *graphe* or *grapteon*, that is, “you should write,” thus offering an instruction for a correction with a conjecture. In Wilson’s words, “the evidence now available justifies the view that some readings hitherto treated as variant readings may well be intelligent conjectures by medieval readers.”<sup>26</sup> In the case of the reviser of M, *oimai* could perhaps indicate tentative suggestions by himself and *gr* (in some cases at least) more confident emendations, not necessarily made by the reviser.

Significant scholarship on the text of Aeschylus was produced in the fourteenth century by Thomas Magistros and especially Dimitrios Triclinius, both residents of Thessaloniki.<sup>27</sup> The main purpose of their commentaries was the teaching of grammar and these primary intentions should be taken into account when judging their philological activity by the standards of modern scholarship.<sup>28</sup> Literary and aesthetical comments are very rare and the focus of these scholars is on elementary exegesis and linguistic analysis. Thomas Magistros wrote such scholia on the Byzantine triad, but there is no evidence that he also edited the text.<sup>29</sup> Sometimes he insists on his view on the meaning of a passage, as in the following comment, which rejects the construction supported by the old scholia. The comment is on *Septem* 101–2 πέπλων καὶ στεφάνων ἴπότη' εἰ μὴ νῦν, ἀμφὶ λιτάν' ἔξομεν; (“When, if not now, shall we busy ourselves with suppliant offerings of robes and garlands?”):<sup>30</sup>

Understand ἔξομεν, as I have said in my note in the text [Thomas refers to his own supralinear gloss], by taking it with ἀμφὶ λιτάν, which you should take with πέπλων καὶ στεφάνων. The word is used in this way and with this

26 See Wilson 2002 and 2008, 81.

27 For the intellectual and scribal activity in Thessaloniki of this time, see Bianconi 2005.

28 Cf. Gaul 2007, 271. For Thomas Magistros and the intellectual life of the late Byzantine literate society, see now Gaul 2011.

29 Dawe 1964, 21. Cf. Smith 1975, 8 n. 12.

30 The translation of *Septem* 101–2 is by West 1990, 101 (and follows an understanding of λιτάν as λιτάν'—see LSJ, s.v. λιτάνος). On the difficulties of this passage see Hutchinson 1984, 62–63; West 1990, 101–2 and Smith 1975, 184–5. Magistros' scholium is edited by Smith 1982 and discussed in Smith 1996, 400–1.

meaning by the orators, as can be seen from Lucian's ἐπεὶ ἀμφὶ πλοῦν εἴχομεν (*Menipp.* 7). Ignorant of this, some people say that ἔξομεν is used instead of ἐξόμεθα and take it with πέπλων. It was customary for the ancients, when they beseeched their gods, to keep in their hands their robes and garlands and propitiate their gods with these.

On the same passage, Dimitrius Triclinius deletes ἔξομεν, because it was “omitted by one of the very old manuscripts.” Triclinius has made an original and lasting contribution to the textual criticism of several authors, including Aeschylus. His autograph MS of Aeschylus survives (Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale 2.F.31) and offers an edition of the triad followed by *Agamemnon* (complete) and *Eumenides* (with some lacunae). There are rich scholia that include “old scholia,” distinguished by his own scholia, marked as such by the note ἡμέτερον (“ours”) and a cross or simply by a cross. Triclinius’ understanding of metre was superior to that of any of his predecessors.<sup>31</sup> He was the first to recognize responsion in lyrics and tried (sometimes successfully) to restore the correspondence of lines.<sup>32</sup> However, he failed to comprehend the lyrics and, for example, his dislike for the paroemiac led him to fill out the lines to a full dimeter.<sup>33</sup> His critical tactics, however ingenious, were often careless and insensitive to the text. For the portion of *Agamemnon* for which he is the sole witness, it is often hard for modern editors to guess the extent of his interventions.<sup>34</sup> Although Triclinius’ contribution is almost exclusively limited to textual criticism and metrical matters, some of his literary comments have also drawn the attention of modern scholars: in *Agamemnon* 165, for example, he grasps very well the religious weight of the passage.<sup>35</sup>

After this short survey on textual transmission and the Byzantine scholia, it will be helpful to mention some critical references to Aeschylus by Byzantine scholars. In one of his letters, the eleventh-century intellectual and writer Michael Psellus apparently considered Aeschylus the most innovative tragedian: “Just as Aeschylus, therefore, may this man (sc. his friend Elias) compose

31 E.g., in *Ag.* 549 he restored the metre by substituting κοῖράνων for τυράννων, which was a gloss added to the text.

32 See, e.g., Fraenkel 1950, vol. 2, 142, on *Ag.* 251ff. and 214, on *Ag.* 408, on which see also West 1990, 185.

33 See Fraenkel 1950, vol. 3, 627, on *Ag.* 1334.

34 On Triclinius as a critic of Aeschylus, see Wilson 1996, 253; Smith 1975; Dawe 1964, 59–64; Fraenkel 1950, vol. 1, esp. 11–5.

35 See Fraenkel 1950, vol. 2, 102 n. 1.

a drama with many new elements and, in turn, you will find even more that is new.”<sup>36</sup> What Psellus has in mind is not clear. It is possible that Aeschylus, as the first of the great tragedians, was credited with the most significant innovations in the structure of ancient tragedy. Aristotle says that Aeschylus introduced the second actor, reduced the chorus and gave the dialogue the leading part.<sup>37</sup> In an essay entitled “Who was the better poet, Euripides or Pisides?” Psellus compares Euripides with Sophocles and Aeschylus:

Now Sophocles and Aeschylus have more profound ideas and a more dignified linguistic arsenal, and though they are not always graceful and their rhythms not always mellifluous, yet their works, on the whole, have greater dignity and, as it were, elegance. Thus, in regard to the *Prometheus Bound*, Aeschylus deviates a bit from his proper character and, taking excessive delight in pure iambs and in little words that flatter the ear, attacked his subject too smoothly. In the rest of his dramas and in particular in his treatment of the house of Darius, he is for the most part forcible and difficult to interpret, and, without being, as it were, an initiate, one would not understand his mysteries.<sup>38</sup>

Aeschylus and Sophocles are commended for their profundity and dignity, Euripides (a few lines below) for his grace and charm. Aeschylus is also found hard to understand, with *Persians* singled out as particularly difficult. What Psellus says about the differences between *Prometheus* and the rest of Aeschylus’ plays anticipates some of the arguments used recently to challenge the play’s authenticity.<sup>39</sup>

John Tzetzes (in his scholia on Ar. *Ran.* 1328) considers Aeschylus grandiloquent and obscure: “Aeschylus is excellent, with the exception of his grandiloquence (κρημνολεκτεῖν) and his frequent obscurity.”<sup>40</sup> Such criticism is not new. In Aristophanes’ *Frogs* 1122, Euripides attacks Aeschylus for being obscure, while Quintilian (*Inst.* 10.1.66) writes on Aeschylus: “lofty, dignified, and

36 Ed. Sathas 1876, 404 (letter 154). The translation is by Dennis 2003.

37 *Poetics* 1449a. Psellus is possibly the author of a short treatise on tragedy, where, however, Aeschylus is not mentioned. See Perusino 1993 and West 1992, 6.

38 The translation is by Dyck 1986, 45 (Greek text in lines 54–64). On this essay see also Conley 2005, 678. Cf. Psellus’ similar thoughts in his short essay entitled “Explanations for common expressions,” edited by Sathas 1876, 538.

39 See a summary in Griffith 1983, 32–4. Cf. Dyck 1986, 60.

40 Edited by Koster 1962, 1076.

grandiloquent often almost to a fault, he is however often crude and lacking polish.”<sup>41</sup>

Others would have been ready to defend Aeschylus against any criticism. John Catrares (fl. 1309–1322 CE), a writer and scribe associated with the literary circle around Dimitrios Triclinius, copied and annotated manuscripts of Aeschylus.<sup>42</sup> He also wrote a satirical poem in anacreontic verses attacking the Bulgarian writer Neophytos Momitzilas Prodrornos for his ignorance of classical literature. Catrares says that Neophytos “calls Euripides wearisomely talkative, Aeschylus a rough speaker (τραχυλέκτην), and the excellent Sophocles difficult.”<sup>43</sup> A very favorite view is taken by an anonymous scholium in the margins of the Aeschylean codex Leidensis Vossianus Gr. Q 4 A, fol. 3r, which reads as follows:

σοφός Σοφοκλῆς, εὐφυῆς δ' Εὐριπίδης·  
τὸν δ' Αἰσχύλον τέθηπα καὶ τούτων πλέον.<sup>44</sup>

Sophocles is wise, Euripides is a genius; but I admire Aeschylus even more than those two.

Eustathius of Thessalonica (ca. 1115–1195/6 CE) refers many times to Aeschylus and cites examples from his plays in his linguistic analyses of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. In one of these references, while commenting on the synizesis of εω in Πηληϊάδεω at *Iliad* 1.1, Eustathius makes the intriguing remark that the rhythm of the Byzantine “political” verse derives from the trochaic tetrameter as we find it in Aeschylus’ *Persians*:

This is clearly demonstrated also by the *demotic* (δημοτικοί) verses, which once were scanned in quantitative trochaics (τροχαϊκῶς ποδιζόμενοι), as Aeschylus shows in the *Persians*, but have recently come to be called *political* (πολιτικοί). For their metrical limit is fifteen syllables.<sup>45</sup>

41 The translation is by Russell 2001, 285.

42 See West 1990, 343, 346–7, 355 n. 1.

43 Ed. Matranga 1850, 675–82, at 679. For τραχυλέκτην see Trapp 1997, 211. Catrares seems to have also written the fragment of a drama (modelled on Euripides) found in an Escorial manuscript. See De Andres, Irigoin, Hörandner 1974 and Bianconi 2000.

44 Edited by Herington (1972, 16 n. 1), who says that the handwriting of this scholium is “very much later” than the scribe’s, which is assigned to the fourteenth century.

45 Eust. *Il.* 1.1 (ed. Van der Valk 1971, 19). The translation is by Jeffreys 1974, 147.



Political verse consisted of a fifteen-syllable meter, and was based on word-accents and not on the traditional prosody. Although this meter was dismissed in some literary circles, it was held in regard by the Comnenian aristocracy and its primary surviving use is in addresses to the emperor and the imperial family.<sup>46</sup> Byzantine scholars and commentators noticed its similarity to any trochaic tetrameter catalectics that coincidentally follow the *political* verses' stress pattern: a break after syllable 8 and compulsory accents on 6 (later either 6 or 8 or both) and 14. In a manuscript of Aeschylus (Laurentianus Pluteus 86.3), dated to 1287, we find the following scholium on *Persians* 155:<sup>47</sup>

Note: some commentators claim that it was from these political verses that the custom arose of making addresses to the emperors in political verse.

*Persians* 155 is an address of the Chorus to Queen Atossa: ὦ βαθυζώνων ἄνασσα Περσίδων ὑπερτάτη ("O Queen, supreme of all the slender Persian women!"). The same verse, among others, is cited by Maximus Planudes (ca. 1255–ca. 1305 CE), who discusses in detail the political verse, which he saw as a serious decline in Byzantine metrics.<sup>48</sup> Planudes cites some tetrameter catalectics from classical tragedy and comedy, but he is fully aware of the fundamental difference between the classical verses and the political verse. The same awareness is not clear in the case of the above-cited commentator, who however acutely, underlines the fact that *Persians* 155 shares more than a metrical similarity with the political verse: praise of an imperial family.

### Allusions and Reminiscences

Allusions and reminiscences traceable in Byzantine authors are fewer for Aeschylus than for Euripides and Sophocles. In this section, several examples are offered from various periods of Byzantium, including both explicit references to and citations from Aeschylus and implicit reminiscences. In my search for such allusions it became evident that Aeschylus is often cited in the

46 Jeffreys 1974, 176–81. On the political verse see also Lauxtermann 1999.

47 Edited and translated by Jeffreys and Smith 1991, 302, where there is an excellent discussion of this scholium.

48 Planudes, *Περὶ γραμματικῆς διάλογος* (Bachmann 1828, 98–101). See Jeffreys 1974, 144–6.

testimonia of editions in cases where, in my view, it is very unlikely that he was actually in the mind of the Byzantine author.<sup>49</sup>

When Emperor Valens announced a plan to partition Cappadocia into two smaller provinces, Basil of Caesarea described in a letter to a local dignitary how catastrophic the consequences of this plan would be. Basil was not able to find the proper words and style to express his despair:

Indeed, we would need a Simonides, or another poet like him, who knows to lament plainly our troubles. But instead of naming Simonides, I should rather mention Aeschylus, or any other who expressed in a similarly clear way a great disaster and lamented with a mighty voice (μεγαλοφώνως).<sup>50</sup>

S. Basil was a man of remarkable classical learning and must have read Aeschylus. But this particular reference to Aeschylus' grandiloquence may have been borrowed from his teacher Himerius: ὦ πάθος τῆς Αἰσχύλου μεγαλοφωνίας ἄξιον (*Or.* 8.4; "O misfortune worthy of Aeschylus' grandiloquence").<sup>51</sup> A similar expression is used by Theodoret of Cyrus (ca. 393–466 CE) in his *Church History* (3.7.5), when he says that the elevated diction (μεγαλληγορία) of Aeschylus and Sophocles would be needed for the description of the sufferings

49 An extreme example is Criscuolo's 1979 edition of Theodosios the Deacon's poem *The Capture of Crete*, written in 962/3 and celebrating the recapture of Crete from the Arabs by Nicephorus Phocas in 961. Out of more than forty references to Aeschylus by Criscuolo, I would accept only four as very likely or certain borrowings from or allusions to Aeschylus: 78 ~ *Pers.* 368; 379 ~ *Ag.* 899; 793 ~ *Ag.* 198–9; 389–90 ~ *Pers.* 402–4. Examples of unlikely references may be found even in excellent editions with generally acceptable testimonia. In his vitriolic attack on Leo Choirosphactes, Arethas (a scholar and archbishop of Ceasarea from 902) says that compared to Gregory of Nazianzus, Choirosphactes is a *κάνθαρος* ("beetle") next to an eagle and that his works bring no honour to the Church fathers and saints: αἰσχροὺν γὰρ καὶ λίαν ἀνόητον, κανθάρων πόνῳ φιλοτιμείσθαι τοὺς μύρων ἀπόζοντας ("it would be shameful and unheard of for the myrrh-smelling to seek after honour from the work of beetles," ed. Westerink 1968, 206, lines 21–2 and 208, lines 3–5). Westerink suggests an allusion to fr. 233 (*Sisyphus Petrocylistes*): Αἰτναῖός ἐστι *κάνθαρος* βίᾳ πονῶν ("he is like a beetle from Mount Etna, toiling powerfully," translated by Sommerstein 2008, vol. 3, 239). However, there is no allusion to Aeschylus here, because the beetles' avoidance of myrrh was proverbial, according to many Greek texts, including Plut. 710e and Arethas himself, *or.* 3 οὐδὲ γὰρ ἡδὺ μύρον κανθάρω ("a beetle has nothing to do with a pleasant myrrh," ed. Westerink 1968, 27, line 8).

50 Letter 74.2 (ed. Courtonne 1957, 174–5). For the historical background see Van Dam 2002, 28–32.

51 Edited by Colonna 1951, 66.

of Mark, bishop of Arethusa, in a proper tragic style.<sup>52</sup> In his *Cure of Greek Maladies* 4.24, Theodoret says that the philosophers who argue and disagree about the planets and the sky are ignorant of Aeschylus saying, “Do not waste your effort at an unfruitful task” (PV 44).<sup>53</sup>

Such explicit references are not found as often as subtle allusions, which are much more difficult to detect. In the anacreontics of Sophronius, patriarch of Jerusalem (634–638 CE), we read on the passion of Christ (*carm.* 14.43–6):

λέπαδνον γάρ αὐτὸν πότμου  
μερόπων ἐκὼν ὑπέστη  
ἰκρίῳ παγεῖς ἐν ἥλοις  
ἵν’ ὅλον τὸ πλάσμα σώσῃ.<sup>54</sup>

He suffered readily the yoke of human death, fastened by nails on a rafter, in order to save all human race.

λέπαδνον (“the strap which fastens the neck to the yoke”) is rare in the singular and is even rarer in a metaphorical use. As Gigante rightly indicates in the testimonia, the use of the word here reminds one of *Agamemnon* 218 ἐπεὶ δ’ ἀνάγκας ἔδω λέπαδνον (“when he [sc. Agamemnon] put on the yoke of necessity” [and became the sacrificial killer of his daughter]).

Ignatius the Deacon, an author of the first half of the ninth century, was interested in tragedy and wrote in iambic trimeters a dramatic dialogue between God, Adam, Eve, and the Serpent, in which he displays knowledge of Sophocles and Euripides.<sup>55</sup> An epigram in the *Palatine Anthology* (15.39) indicates that he also did some scholarly work on Homer.<sup>56</sup> In one of his letters (37.20)<sup>57</sup> his language seems to have been inspired by Aeschylus: κρήνας ἡδὺ γάνος ἀφείσας (“wells emitting sweet water”) can be paralleled with *Persians* 483 ἀμφὶ κρηναῖον γάνος.<sup>58</sup> Similar textual borrowings and allusions can also be

52 Edited by Parmentier 1954, 183. Later in the twelfth century, Constantine Manasses makes a similar statement, which, however, couples the art of Aeschylus with the “excessive lament” (πενθικὴ στρωμυλία) of Phrynichus: *Odoiporikon* 1.214–15 (ed. Chrysogelos 2017).

53 Edited by Canivet 1958, 210.

54 Edited by Gigante 1981, 51.

55 See Browning 1968.

56 See Lauxtermann 2003, 112–3.

57 See the edition of Mango 1997, from which I cite text and translation.

58 The expression ἐκχαλέσσομαι δάκρυον (“I shall elicit tears,” Letter 62.11), however, for which Mango cites only *Agamemnon* 270, occurs in several other authors, including the Cappadocian Church Fathers.

found in the iambic *Chiliostichos Theologia* (“Theology in a Thousand Lines”) by Leo Choïrosphactes, a diplomat and writer of the late ninth and early tenth centuries CE.<sup>59</sup>

The dialogue *Philopatris*,<sup>60</sup> of unknown authorship and uncertain date, perhaps refers in an allusive way to the recapture of Crete from the Arabs by Nicephorus Phocas in 961. A messenger called Cleolaus announces an unexpected win against “the Persians” and the forthcoming fall of “Sousa” (28.11–5):<sup>61</sup>

The Persians’ old-famed pride has fallen, along with Susa, the famous town. And may all Arabia too fall by the most powerful strength of the conqueror’s hand.

For the opening, compare *Septem* 794 “the boasts of the mighty men have fallen” and *Pers.* 252 “the flower of the Persians has vanished,” and 730 “the whole city of Susa laments its lack of men.” If this is indeed a reference to Nicephorus Phocas and his victories over the Arabs, then the Persians, the ancient enemies of Greece, represent here the Saracens, the most dangerous enemies of Byzantium at the time. In later times, a mid-fifteenth-century lament for the fall of the Athens to the “Persians” identifies the Ottoman Turks with the ancient Persians.<sup>62</sup> Edith Hall suggested that the inclusion of *Persians* in the triad may have served “the earlier Byzantines’ need for texts reinforcing their own ethnic self-definitions.”<sup>63</sup> However, the Byzantines usually thought of themselves as Rhomaioi and there does not seem to be enough evidence in surviving Byzantine texts to support Hall’s claim.<sup>64</sup> The identification of invading non-Christian enemies as “barbarian Persians” occurs also in the famous speech by Pope Urban at Clermont in 1095 CE.

In an encomiastic speech of Psellus on the ability of the monk Ioannes Kroustoulas to read aloud, he alludes to a curious story about Aeschylus recorded in the Suda. Kroustoulas’ skill, Psellus says, is superb and incomparable:

59 See Vassis 2002, 41, 88, 103, 111, 122–3, 135, 153.

60 See Hunger 1978, vol. 2, 149–51 and the ODB article (s.v. *Philopatris*) for a summary of the views on its date and authorship.

61 Edited by Macleod 1987. The dialogue is transmitted with the works of Lucian in several manuscripts.

62 See Van Steen, 2014.

63 Hall 2007, 174.

64 It may suffice to say that an exhortation for the defence of children, wives and fatherland, clearly alluding to *Persians* 402–4 (ὦ παῖδες Ἑλλήνων, ἴτε ... “o, sons of the Greeks!” etc), is placed by Theodosius the Deacon (*The Capture of Crete* 389–90) in a speech of the Arab emir encouraging his soldiers!

Let the Aeschyluses and Stesichoruses perish. They probably knew, as the story goes, how to subdue the crowds with the flute, but they lost their lives in a bad way by a pirate's hand [...]; for all are inferior to him in chanting and goodness of voice.<sup>65</sup>

In his *Life of Saint Auxentius*, Psellus narrates how the saint, who lived in the fifth century CE, led a festal procession of the local people to the place where a monastery would be founded under his spiritual guidance and protection. Psellus describes how the entire local population, including babies carried in their mothers' arms, followed their spiritual father in this procession.<sup>66</sup> The babies were a burden easy to bear (ἄχθος εὐάγκαλον) in their arms, unlike Prometheus' brother Atlas, who supports the pillar of heaven and earth on his shoulders, "a burden not easy to hold in the arms" (ἄχθος οὐκ εὐάγκαλον, *PV* 350). This line of Prometheus is cited by Plutarch (923C) and may also be alluded to by Constantine Manasses in his *Chronicle*. Manasses talks of the difficult burden of a tax increase imposed by Emperor Nicephorus I (802–11), because he wanted to repair the walls of Constantinople (*Breviarium Chronicum* 4491–3):<sup>67</sup> "he placed a heavy burden (βαρὺ ... ἄχθος) on the Byzantines, a burden that was neither lightweight, nor easy to bear (οὐδ' εὐάγκαλον) or light to carry, in order to renovate the old walls."

There were of course lines from Aeschylus that had become proverbial already in Late Antiquity and Byzantine authors used them frequently as proverbs. Examples include fr. 139.4–5 Radt (Myrmidons) τὰδ' οὐχ ὑπ' ἄλλων, ἀλλὰ τοῖς αὐτῶν πετεροῖς / ἀλίσκόμεσθα ("so we are vanquished, not by others', but by our own feathers"), the words of an eagle, which, when shot by an arrow, sees its feathering on the arrow. The fable is narrated by Achilles, who considers himself responsible for his sufferings, because *he* sent Patroclus into battle. The expression τοῖς οἰκείοις πετεροῖς ἀλίσκόμενος ("taken by your own feathers") is found in several writers, including Libanius, John Chrysostom, Theodore Studites (eighth–ninth centuries), George Metochites (thirteenth century) and Nicephorus Gregoras (fourteenth century).<sup>68</sup> Other authors, such as Gregory of Nazianzus,

65 Edited by Littlewood 1985, 145–6 (*Or.* 37.259–64). For discussion see Papaioannou 2013, 114–5. The assumption is that Aeschylus the aulos-player is the tragic poet (see Lefkowitz 2012, 170 n. 69).

66 Edited by Fisher, 1994, 88 and discussed by Fisher 2006.

67 Edited by Lampsides 1996, 245.

68 For more testimonia see Radt 1985, 252–6.

modified the expression (*carm.* I.1.6. 19): οὕτω μὲν οὗτοι σφῶν ἀλίσκονται λόγοις (“in this way these are caught by their own words”).<sup>69</sup>

Other Aeschylean proverbial expressions are found in later Byzantine authors only. Examples include δέλτοις φρενός ἐγγράφω (“engrave on the tablets of one’s mind,” cf. *PV* 789), found in Eustathius of Thessalonica, John Tzetzes and Michael Choniates, as well as ὀμμάτων ... γοργωπὸν σέλας (“a hideous glare of the eyes,” *PV* 356), which occurs in Michael Psellus and Anna Comnena.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, the phrase πυρὸς ... γνάθος (“the jaws of fire”) at *Libation Bearers* 325 (cf. *PV* 368) occurs again in several authors of the twelfth century, for example Theodore Prodromos, Eustathius of Thessalonica and Constantine Manasses. At least one of these authors must have borrowed the expression directly from Aeschylus.

It is not surprising that John Tzetzes and Eustathius show knowledge of Aeschylus in their letters. Tzetzes cites (in part or in full) lines from *Septem*, *Prometheus*, *Agamemnon*, and *Eumemides*.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, Eustathius alludes to lines from *Prometheus* and *Septem*,<sup>72</sup> while also citing an otherwise unattested fragment from Aeschylus.<sup>73</sup> Nicephorus Basilakes, a theologian and writer of the twelfth century, cites Aeschylus once in his rhetorical indictment against a certain Bagoas.<sup>74</sup> Basilakes says that Bagoas was a hypocrite, able to transform himself according to the circumstances. Bagoas:

... does not praise the noble saying of Aeschylus, that one may “not wish to appear the best, but also to be the best,” but admires the scurrilous saying by Euripides which accepts “the appearance, even if it is far from the truth.”

The verses cited, with some modifications, are Aeschylus, *Septem* 592<sup>75</sup> and Euripides, *Orestes* 236. It is interesting to notice how Aeschylus is presented as an edifying author in contrast to Euripides.

69 Migne, *PG* 37.431.

70 *Prometheus Vincetus* 356 is also cited in full by John Tzetzes in his *Theogony* 290.

71 See Leone 1972, 3–4, 31, 56, 59–60, 89.

72 See Kolovou 2006, 22, 25, 38.

73 Fr. 458 (Radt 1985, 500). For Eustathius’ letter (29.10) see Kolovou 2006, 83.

74 Garzya 1984, 102. All other references to Aeschylus in Garzya’s testimonia are almost certainly not related to Aeschylus’ text.

75 The same verse is cited by John Mauropous in his letter 74.19–20. See Karpozilos 1990, 191 and Wilson 1996 152–3.

Two twelfth-century dramatic works, *Catomyomachia* (“The Battle of Mice and Cat”) and *Christos Paschon* (“Christ’s Passion”), written in dodecasyllables, borrow language and style from tragedy. The works may be better described as centos in dialogue form, with structural elements similar to those of classical tragedy.<sup>76</sup> Theodore Prodromos’ *Catomyomachia* is a parody of ancient Greek tragedy. The tragic diction in the mouths of the timid mice produces comical effect: καλὸν τὸ νικᾶν (= Eur. *Phoen.* 1200)—ἀλλὰ δειλία μ’ ἔχει “victory is honourable—but I am a coward.”<sup>77</sup> The second part of *Catomyomachia* has striking similarities with the dialogue between the chorus and the queen Atossa in the *Persians*.<sup>78</sup> In *Christos Paschon* the action is replaced by narrative accounts and emphasis is placed on sudden changes in emotions (especially those of the protagonist, the Virgin Mary). Although Euripides is the main source of linguistic material, there are also 20 quotations from *Agamemnon* and *Prometheus*.<sup>79</sup> In the same century, a prose romance (called *drama* in one of the manuscripts)<sup>80</sup> written by Eustathius Macrembolites included citations from Homer, Hesiod, Theocritus, and the tragedians.<sup>81</sup>

This catalogue will end with two authors from the Palaeologan Period. Theodore Metochites (1270–1332), a statesman and a scholar, in his *Ethical Discourse, or On Education*<sup>82</sup> refers to the grace of *logos* (ἡ τοῦ λόγου χάρις) as a unique privilege of man. This grace is the teacher of true happiness and appropriate behaviour and guides everything in the best possible way. At this point, Metochites recalls Eteocles’ words at the beginning of *Septem*, when he adds for the grace of *logos*:

It foresees and organizes everything in a simple way, as Aeschylus says, sitting alone at the stern of the city, governing and leading everything well, so that they are useful.

76 For these two works see Hunger 1978, vol. 2, 102–4. For *Christos Paschon* see also the ODB (s.v.) and Puchner 2002, 317–9.

77 See Hunger 1969/1970, 36. For all borrowings from tragedy (including Aeschylus) in *Catomyomachia* see Hunger 1968, 44–7.

78 See Marciniak 2004, 98 (with a reference to Popović 1991/1992).

79 Pontani 2006 has discussed a striking allusion to both *Agamemnon* 594–7 and *Psalms* 50.18–9 in the Mother of God’s monologue that opens the drama. For Aeschylus in *Christos Paschon* see also Somers 2010.

80 See the edition of Marcovich 2001, 1.

81 For an interesting case concerning Aeschylus see Nilsson 2001, 275.

82 Edited by Polemis 1995, 258–9.

Metochites also begins his critical essay on Demosthenes and Aelius Aristides with an explicit citation of *Prometheus* 818: “As I have more leisure than I wish (to use Aeschylus’ words), I happened to have in my hands some books of Demosthenes.”<sup>83</sup>

Gregory Acindynos (first half of the fourteenth century) refers in one of his letters (31.3–4) to a man “who has great strength and, as epic poetry (i.e. Homer) says, “irresistible force” (σθένος ἀδύριτον) of eloquence in his tongue and piety in his soul.”<sup>84</sup> But σθένος ἀδύριτον comes from *Prometheus* 105 and it seems that Acindynos was either confused or not interested in the precise source of this citation.<sup>85</sup>

To sum up, almost all cases of allusions described above concern linguistic borrowings or citations with no meaningful connection to the original passage. A great number of these cases come from the twelfth century, a period of intellectual revival sometimes called the ‘Third Sophistic.’<sup>86</sup> However, references to Aeschylus come from various Byzantine periods, with some early scholars referring positively to Aeschylus’ grandiloquence, while later ones considering Aeschylus difficult and obscure. A careful scrutiny of all Aeschylean manuscripts is likely to shed more light on Byzantine scholars’ understanding of Aeschylus’ text.<sup>87</sup>

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83 The text has been edited by Gigante 1969, 47, who points out that this verse is cited by Athenaeus. For Metochites’ essay see Conley 2005, 669–70, 689–90.

84 Edited, with English translation, by Constantinides Hero 1983, 113–5. For discussion of this particular passage and the meaning of the phrase κατὰ τὸ ἔπος in Byzantine texts, see Christidis 1996, 195–6.

85 Such mistakes occur in other authors. Leo Choïrosphactes in his letter 21 cites a rare poetic word attributing it to Euripides, whereas it occurs only in *Prometheus*. See Kolias 1939, 100–1 and cf. Wilson 1996, 26.

86 See, e.g., Kaldellis 2007, 225–316.

87 I am indebted to Nigel G. Wilson for his observations on this chapter.



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**PART 2**

***Modern Receptions***







# Aeschylus and Opera

Michael Ewans

## Introduction

Only two operas drawn from a tragedy by Aeschylus were composed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, despite this being a peak period for the use of Greek and Roman material. Stories from Greek myth were popular from the start, but no actual Greek tragedies were adapted for the stage for sixty years after the first opera (Péri's *Dafne* of 1597–8). Adaptations began with Pietro Andrea Zanni's *Antigona delusa di Alceste* (1660),<sup>1</sup> and Euripides was the favoured author; *Alceste*, the two Iphigenia plays and *Medea* were the Greek tragedies most frequently chosen to furnish source material for opera librettos. The adaptations were very free, with romantic plots and sub-plots, spectacle, ballets and sometimes even comic interludes.

The much more complex work of Aeschylus was difficult to adapt, and his subject matter was distant from the popular taste of the period. The ancient Greek chorus, which is very difficult to reshape into opera, plays a much greater part in Aeschylus than in Euripides; his language is high-flown and sometimes obscure, and his tragedies contain no elements of adventure or potential for romance, which were essential for popularity with Baroque audiences. In addition to that, three tragedies (*Seven against Thebes*, *Suppliants* and *Prometheus Bound*) survive from trilogies of which the other two dramas are lost, leaving the grim *Persians* and the formidable *Oresteia* as Aeschylus' only complete surviving works. Even at the start of the nineteenth century Goethe, though he admired the trilogy, described it as “a primaevally gigantic form, of monstrous shape” to which it was hard to make an adequate response.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps because of the problems involved, no opera was based on any of Aeschylus' actual tragedies—apart from an unsuccessful *Cassandra* in 1706 and an unperformed *Clytemnestre* written in 1787<sup>3</sup>—until Taneyev's *Oresteia* (1895); the two most

<sup>1</sup> Despite the title, this opera has no relationship to Sophocles' *Antigone*.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to von Humbolt, 1816, quoted at Nestle 1962, xi.

<sup>3</sup> *Cassandra* by Toussaint Bertin de la Doué and François Bouvard; *Clytemnestre* by Niccolò Piccini. See Philippon 2005, 77 and 79. Some further works before 1895, which could be based

important works before that with a relationship to Aeschylus are Salieri's *Les Danaïdes*, which is a sequel to *Suppliants*, and Wagner's *The Nibelung's Ring*, a trilogy of "stage festival plays" based on Norse and German mythology, which was inspired by Wagner's engagement with the *Oresteia*. I shall study these works and Taneyev's *Oresteia* in some detail, then examine two twentieth-century adaptations of *Prometheus Bound*, and conclude with a brief survey of some twentieth-century operas based on the *Oresteia*.

### The Daughters of Danaus

There is one important opera libretto based on the Danaid trilogy before Salieri; Hypermestra's devotion to her husband Lynceus, and her defiance of her father's command to murder him, were the subject of an *opera seria* text by the immensely popular librettist Pietro Metastasio. He wrote it in 1744 for Johann Hasse to set, appropriately, for wedding celebrations in Vienna. Twenty-nine other composers subsequently set Metastasio's *Ipermestra*; for one of his texts this was only a moderate success.

Danao (Danaus), king of Argos, is told by an oracle that he will lose his life at the hands of a son of his brother Aegyptus; his daughter Ipermestra is betrothed to one of them, Linceo (Lynceus), and because of the oracle Danao orders her to kill him on their wedding night (there is no mention of the murder of their husbands by the other daughters of Danaus, who do not appear in the opera). Ipermestra refuses. Complications then ensue, culminating with an uprising led by Linceo and his friend Plistene. They break into the king's chambers meaning to kill him, but Ipermestra intervenes to save Danao, and, after their rebellion has been suppressed, she pleads for the lives of Linceo and Plistene. Surprisingly, Danao pardons the rebels, and allows Ipermestra to marry Linceo.

This text has both the romantic complications and the *lieto fine* (happy ending) which contemporary taste demanded, but it removes all the violence from the classical original. The myth was not treated in an Aeschylean manner, with the full gruesome story of the other Danaïdes' murder of all their husbands, until Antonio Salieri's *Les Danaïdes* of 1784. Ranieri de' Calzabigi's

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on Aeschylus, are listed in the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama database (see note 36); but details of most of these are very sketchy, and Giovanni Legrenzi's *Eteocle e Polynice*, for example (Venice, 1675) has a libretto full of love-interests, which bears no relationship to *Seven against Thebes*.

Italian-language libretto was intended for Gluck (who had collaborated with him on a series of pioneering operas which reformed the medium), but the text was reworked into French without Calzabigi's knowledge or consent by two literary figures who chose to remain anonymous, and the opera was performed at the Paris Opéra. Gluck was alleged to have composed the music, with credit to the Vienna court composer Antonio Salieri for some small portions of the work. However, Gluck, who was now 69 and had been unwilling to travel to or work for Paris since the tepid response to the last opera he had produced there, confessed after the sixth performance that Salieri had in fact composed the whole opera; Calzabigi, who felt defrauded by Gluck and plagiarized by the librettists, protested vigorously. The surviving librettist, Marius François Louis du Roullet, threw off his anonymity and replied with equal vigour, and the quarrel gave priceless free publicity to Salieri's first Paris opera. *Les Danaïdes* was an immediate and lasting success. It was performed 127 times at the Opéra between the premiere and 1828, and is still occasionally revived today.

As the opera begins the sons of Aegyptus are disembarking in Argos to marry the Danaïdes, ending the long feud between their fathers. Danaüs and Lyncée swear an oath to Juno that there will be no more hatred. The Danaïdes join hands with their bridegrooms, and Lyncée pledges himself to his loved one, Hypermnestre. In the second Act, set in the underground temple of Nemesis, Danaüs claims that Aegyptus has incited his sons to murder them all, and orders his daughters to kill their husbands on the wedding night. They swear to do this, but Hypermnestre refuses, and Danaüs threatens his defiant daughter with death if she betrays the secret to Lyncée.

In Act III, during the wedding celebrations, Lyncée offers his bride the wedding goblet. Hypermnestre recoils in horror. Danaüs threatens Hypermnestre again, *sotto voce*, and she flees the scene. Lyncée, upset, wants to follow her, but Danaüs restrains him. The Act ends as the other couples go to their bridal chambers.

Act IV is set in a gallery near the Danaïdes' apartments. Hypermnestre begs her father for mercy, but Danaüs refuses, and demands her obedience. When Lyncée comes to consummate his marriage, she tries to get him to flee to save his life. He misunderstands, and accuses her of betraying their pledge to marry each other. Hypermnestre almost reveals the secret, but remains silent out of fear. Pélagus,<sup>4</sup> the captain of Danaüs' guards, comes to warn Lyncée; they leave to get reinforcements. The screams and cries of the other husbands can be heard as they are murdered, and Hypermnestre faints.

4 In Aeschylus' version, Pelasgus is the king of Argos prior to Danaus' arrival.

The fifth and final Act begins immediately in the same location. Hypermnestre believes that Lyncée is dead, and only realizes that her bridegroom has escaped when Danaüs appears, demanding to see his corpse. When Danaüs learns that Hypermnestre has disobeyed him, he is furious and has her put in chains, threatening terrible revenge for her treason. In an astonishing stage direction, the Danaïdes now “rush in from all directions, wild and disheveled, half-naked, wearing tiger skins. Some have a thyrsus in one hand and a bloodstained dagger in the other. Others strike tambourines with daggers. Others carry flaming torches.” These maddened Bacchantes invoke Dionysus, celebrating their victory over their husbands.<sup>5</sup>

Danaüs now sends them in pursuit of Lyncée. But Lyncée and Pélagus have gathered their troops, and kill the Danaïdes (offstage). They enter the palace. Danaüs is about to murder Hypermnestre, but Pélagus kills him. The heavens darken and the earth quakes; Lyncée, Hypermnestre, and their troops flee, to seek a new life back in Egypt. The king’s palace is struck by lightning, consumed by flames and swallowed up by the earth.

The final scene is set in Hades. Danaüs is chained to a rock, and a vulture rips out his bloody entrails. The Danaïdes, most of whom are chained to one another, are tormented by demons, tortured by snakes which endlessly devour their bowels, and persecuted by the Furies. They beg in vain for mercy as the curtain falls.

This libretto is a worthy sequel to Aeschylus’ *Suppliants*. The evidence for the lost plays of the Danaid trilogy is scant and hard to interpret, but the action of the first four Acts of *Les Danaïdes* is congruent with what we know or can conjecture of developments in Aeschylus’ second and third dramas, *Egyptians* and *Danaïdes*.<sup>6</sup> There are, however, three elements in the libretto which are likely to diverge from Aeschylus; all are in Act v:

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- 5 There are moments in Aeschylus’ surviving *Suppliants* —the first play of his trilogy—which foreshadow the maenadic behaviour of the Danaïdes in the opera. Aeschylus’ Danaus early on enjoins them to be calm and sensible, not bold and wild (197–9)—but then they do not hesitate to threaten the irredeemable pollution of hanging themselves on the statues of the gods, when Pelasgus seems to hesitate to grant them asylum in Argos (455ff.) Later on, during the approach of the Egyptian soldiers and the Herald’s attempt to use force to take them to their bridegrooms (777ff.), their lyrics are full of dire emotional fantasies first of extreme ways to escape and then of violent bloodshed.
  - 6 On these see Garvie 1969, 113 and 163–233, Winnington-Ingram 1983, 55–72 and Ewans 1996, xlvi–l. It appears from the fragments that Pelasgus is killed while fighting to defend the Danaids from the sons of Aegyptus, and Danaus himself is somehow named king in his place. Recent scholarship on the *Suppliant Maidens* has emphasized the role of Danaus as a dangerous manipulator (Bakewell, 2013) or aspiring tyrant (Kennedy, 2014, ch. 1) who uses his

- 1.) Calzabigi and Salieri unleash supernatural forces in a scenic spectacle, which was not possible in the ancient Greek theatre, to obliterate the palace where this monstrous crime took place.<sup>7</sup>
- 2.) In one important classical source Lynceus and Hypermestra did not return to Egypt, but remained in Argos as the next king and queen ([Aeschylus] *Prometheus Bound* 869ff). Aeschylus probably followed that version of the myth in his final play, *Danaïdes*.
- 3.) The punishment of the Danaïdes in Hades is probably a myth invented after Aeschylus' time;<sup>8</sup> his trilogy might have ended with the Danaïdes being freed from the *miasma* of their crime, and foreshadowed their finding new husbands of their own choosing in Argos (though this is far from certain). But recent scholarship has detected elements in *Suppliants* that raise the possibility that Aeschylus staged a darker ending in his *Danaïdes*.<sup>9</sup> Whichever was the case, Calzabigi decided to use the story of punishment in the afterlife—and indeed to intensify it, since the torments inflicted on the Danaïdes in his closing scene are far more painful than endlessly trying to fill a bottomless jar with water, as in the classical story. And his spectacular finale is also congruent with contemporary expectations. Quite rightly, in the eyes of a late eighteenth-century audience, there is a happy ending only for the heroic couple Hypermnestre and Lyncée; and since virtue has been rewarded with the rescue of Hypermnestre from death at the hands of her father, vice is duly punished in Danaüs and the Danaïdes.

Salieri's music responds to the opportunities for psychological depth, as well as for terror and spectacle, which the libretto provides. As one would expect from

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daughters and their impending marriage as a cover for claiming kingship in Argos. Danaüs' behavior in Acts II–V of *Les Danaïdes* would clearly be consistent with these readings of the fragments.

7 However, at the end of *Prometheus Bound*, traditionally ascribed to Aeschylus but now thought to be by an author much later in the fifth century, possibly his son Euphorion, an earthquake unleashed by Zeus apparently buries underground Prometheus, the rock on which he is bound, and the chorus of daughters of Ocean! And in Euripides' *Bacchae*, Dionysus makes Pentheus' palace collapse and escapes from imprisonment inside it. Perhaps the ancient Athenians had more advanced theatrical effects at their disposal than we give them credit for? (Most scholars suggest that these two events were left to the spectators' imagination, but normally the Athenian tragedians only dramatized events that could be realistically enacted in their theatre.)

8 The story is told in Hyginus *Fabulae* 168, a late compilation of legends.

9 Above, note 6.

a Calzabigi text, *Les Danaïdes* is shaped as a *tragédie lyrique* after the style of the late Gluck reform operas from *Alceste* to *Iphigénie en Tauride*.<sup>10</sup> The music is continuous throughout each scene; the *airs* (arias) are relatively short, and in Salieri's setting all the recitative is accompanied by the orchestra and highly expressive. There are intense choral outbursts, and Salieri, like Gluck, avoids opportunities for decorative ornamentation for solo singers, something that had been carried to excess in the preceding period of *opera seria*.

From the severe opening bars of the turbulent overture onwards, Salieri's score is vigorous, compelling, fast-moving, and passionate. I would particularly single out as highlights Hypermnestre's *air* 'Foudre celeste!' at the end of Act II, in which she calls on the gods to strike her dead to put her out of her misery; the psychologically subtle scene with Lyncée, in which Hypermnestre is torn between loyalty to her father and to her husband (IV.3); the choral scene where the other Danaïdes appear after the murders as rejoicing maenads; and above all the extremely powerful, furious music, which is first heard in the penultimate scene, accompanying the earthquake and the destruction of the palace; it then plays on while the curtain is down and the scene is being changed, and continues without slackening pace into the final scene in Hades, where it accompanies the demons' implacable rejection of the Danaïdes' pleas for mercy and drives the opera to its grim ending.

### Wagner and Aeschylus

The most far-reaching reception of Aeschylus into opera resulted in a work which is not based on Greek myth at all—Richard Wagner's *The Nibelung's Ring*, a cycle of three "stage festival plays" with a "preliminary evening" based on Teutonic myths and legends.<sup>11</sup> These four highly innovative music dramas were first staged under Wagner's own direction in 1876, in a new theatre specially constructed for their performance at Bayreuth in Bavaria.

In 1847, when Wagner was completing the orchestration of his most recent opera *Lohengrin*, he read Aeschylus "for the first time with mature feeling and understanding." The impact of Aeschylus' trilogy was so great that:

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10 Howard's classic study (1963) remains the best descriptive analysis of Gluck's innovations, which were all designed to make opera more dramatic than the by then ossified medium of *opera seria*, with its long, static arias primarily for vocal display, and its *recitativo secco*, declamation with only sustained harpsichord chords for accompaniment.

11 See also Seaford, this volume.

I could see the *Oresteia* with my mind's eye, as if actually being performed; and its effect on me was indescribable. There was nothing to equal the exalted emotion evoked in me by *Agamemnon*, and to the close of *The Eumenides* I remained in a state of transport from which I have never really returned to become fully reconciled with modern literature. My ideas about the significance of drama, and especially of the theatre itself were decisively moulded by these impressions ...<sup>12</sup>

The impact of the *Oresteia* freed Wagner from the artistic impasse which he had reached after the completion of *Lohengrin*. He composed no new music for nearly five years, and during his exile in Zurich (he had taken a prominent—though futile—part in the Dresden insurrection of 1849) he rethought his aims and methods as an artist in three major prose treatises: *Art and Revolution*, *The Art Work of the Future*, and *Opera and Drama*.

Wagner used the example of Greek tragedy to register and clarify his fundamental dissatisfaction with the theatre of his own times. He argued that the Greeks poured into their drama “the noblest principles of consciousness,” while in his own times intelligent people justifiably despised the theatre. Greek tragedy was not performed as an everyday evening's entertainment, but at a religious festival; and the relationship of actors to audience was entirely different—the Athenians themselves acted in their dramas, working for nothing or for a token reward, rather than delegating this all-important task to half-despised members of the lower classes. And the vision of Aeschylus instructing his fellow-citizens in the route to future wisdom, towards the close of *Eumenides*, raised a powerful echo for Wagner of his own conception of the artist's place in society.

Above all, Aeschylus opened Wagner's eyes to the way in which national myths could be used as the vehicle for deep truths, something that the historical material on which he had recently drawn for his last two conventional operas, *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*, was insufficient to convey: “the gods and heroes of [a nation's] religion and saga are the concrete personalities in which the spirit of the community portrays its essence to itself.”<sup>13</sup> Now Wagner penetrated behind the mediaeval *Nibelungenlied*, whose chivalric ethos had obscured his vision of the true, often savage, power of the Nibelung legends, and he studied the much earlier Norse Eddas and the *Volsung Saga*. Aeschylus showed Wagner how to handle this rich and challenging material. In the *Oresteia* Aeschylus staged only a single, isolated sequence of actions in each

12 Wagner 1983, 342–3.

13 Wagner 1892–9, 7.266.

play, selecting from the body of stories available to him and creating his own version of the incidents, using a limited number of characters and scenes and evoking the surrounding penumbra of related events only by allusion or narration. And each drama of the *Oresteia* builds up to one climactic event shortly before the end. Wagner responded to his reading of Aeschylus in 1848 by drafting a prose sketch of the Nibelung legends—the story of Siegfried's death and its mythical background. The sequence of events that he outlined then was to become in three years' time, with only a few modifications, the plot of the four dramas of the *Ring*. When the texts were complete, they copied Aeschylus' way of using myth, and each Act of the three main dramas of the *Ring*—*Die Walküre*, *Siegfried*, and *Götterdämmerung*—proceeds in an Aeschylean manner to one single climax.

Furthermore, Wagner begins like Aeschylus with a crime that generates the subsequent events of the whole trilogy. Wagner's most significant additions to the Nibelung story are Alberich's act of foreswearing love to seize the Rhine gold and forge the ring of power, and Wotan's subsequent seizure of that ring. We see these events onstage in the "preliminary evening," *Das Rheingold*. This corresponds to the sacrifice of Iphigenia, which is narrated in the first choral ode of *Agamemnon*. Both trilogies begin when principal male characters sacrifice love to gain power; and the rest of each cycle explores the fateful consequences. In Aeschylus, first Clytemnestra in *Agamemnon* and then the young Orestes in *Libation Bearers* attempt to re-make Agamemnon's deed and purge the world of its consequences; resolution is only achieved in the third drama with the trial at Athens, when the goddess of wisdom resolves the conflict and redirects the anger of the Furies. Similarly in the first main drama of the *Ring*, *Die Walküre*, Wotan tries to undo the effects of Alberich's curse and of his own previous possession of the ring, and when that attempt fails, bequeaths his beloved daughter Brünnhilde to a young hero, Siegfried, whose development is central to the second drama. Siegfried acquires both the ring and, at the end of the drama, Brünnhilde. In the final drama *Götterdämmerung*, Siegfried arrogantly rejects the Rhine daughters' pleas and will not give them back the ring. This ensures his death by treachery, while Brünnhilde then gains through suffering as much wisdom and power as Athena; she resolves the conflicts of the trilogy, confers on Wotan the immolation which he now desires, and returns the ring to the Rhine daughters.<sup>14</sup>

One important feature of Greek tragedy even influenced the nature of the orchestral music in the *Ring*. Wagner noted and absorbed the ways in which

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14 For a detailed analysis of how Wagner echoes and interacts with themes, characters and scenes from the *Oresteia*, see Ewans 1982, 113–255.



the *Oresteia* the chorus' lyric meditations on events reflect on and add depth to the action in the spoken scenes, and he claimed on several occasions that the orchestra plays the same part in his new dramas as the chorus in Greek tragedy. This claim should not be dismissed. Wagner's newly rich kind of orchestral music in the *Ring*, in his own words, "encloses the performer with an atmospheric ring of art and nature."<sup>15</sup> A complex of over seventy principal themes, which Wagner called "motifs of reminiscence," is developed through the main action of the trilogy from the musical material deployed in *Das Rheingold*.

There is a fundamental conflict at the heart of the *Ring*, between gentle motifs expressing the female powers of Nature, associated with Freia the goddess of love and with Erda, the goddess of the Earth who is also the Wala or primal prophetess,<sup>16</sup> and fateful products of male violence—the motifs associated with the sword Notung and with Wotan's spear, and above all the baleful motif to which Alberich pronounces his curse when the ring is taken from him, which reappears trenchantly, played by three trombones in unison, whenever the ring's malevolent force is being felt in a situation. These musical motifs work very much like the verbal motifs which recur in the *Oresteia*, such as "he who does, must suffer." They create and shape expectations in the audience—expectations which are subsequently fulfilled to the accompaniment of developed versions of the music that originally created the expectation.<sup>17</sup> And the conflict in the *Ring* between older female powers and patriarchal, younger powers itself mirrors the gender conflict in the *Oresteia*, which begins with Clytemnestra in *Agamemnon* and reaches its climax in the argument between the Furies and Apollo in the trial scene of *Eumenides*; it is then resolved in the Finale by Athena's offer to the Furies of a permanent home at Athens.<sup>18</sup>

Wagner not only created, following the example of Aeschylus, this extraordinary operatic cycle which is one of the pinnacles of western art; he also found in King Ludwig II of Bavaria a sponsor willing to finance a purpose-built theatre and fulfill his dream of staging the *Ring* unimpeded by normal commercial constraints. Wagner inaugurated in the modern world the idea of an arts festival, analogous to the Festival of Dionysus at Athens. It was held in summertime, with singers and orchestral musicians donating their time *gratis* for the honor of performing these remarkable new works. Then as now spectators

15 Wagner 1892–9, 1.191.

16 The female Woodbird, which gives advice to Siegfried towards the end of Act II of *Siegfried*, also shares this kind of material. Cf. Ewans 1982, 182–7.

17 For examples see Ewans 1982, 73–6.

18 On the similarities and differences between Athena as resolving figure and Brunnhilde as redeemer, see Ewans 1982, 245–51.

came to Bayreuth from far and wide to hear the operas. They were expected to relax during the day, and assemble by 4 pm for the performances, in which there are intervals of one hour between the Acts to allow for proper absorption of what has been heard and seen. In these ways Wagner distanced his “stage festival plays” as far as possible from the normal evening entertainments of the commercial theatre of his time, so that his spectators, like Aeschylus, might clearly grasp his central socio-political message to them.<sup>19</sup>

### Sergei Taneyev: *Oresteia*

This dark and powerful opera, first performed in St Petersburg in 1895, is almost the only notable transformation of any drama by Aeschylus into opera. It is Taneyev's largest work, and he was closely involved in the shaping of the libretto, which is the work of Aleksey Venkstern.<sup>20</sup> In adapting Aeschylus' trilogy, Taneyev made substantial changes to enable contemporary Russian audiences to understand the story. He abolished the long meditations of the Elders in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, and replaced them with a four-part mixed chorus, which led to more interesting music, but eliminated the gender conflict between Aeschylus' Clytemnestra and the suspicious and (after the murder of Agamemnon) downright hostile male Elders. He also removed the hints of impending disaster in the first half of *Agamemnon*, which had doubtless been sufficiently ominous for an Athenian audience familiar with other treatments of the myths of the house of Atreus. Instead he brings Aegisthus on early in the opera. Aegisthus tells us of his strong motivation—the banquet of Thyestes, when Agamemnon's father had killed all his siblings; then Clytemnestra joins him for a duet, in which they eagerly anticipate the moment when that crime will be avenged by Agamemnon's death.

The chorus and orchestra celebrate Agamemnon's return extravagantly; but Taneyev then uses his music to show the hypocritical exaggeration of Clytemnestra's welcome, before responding to the *stichomythia* in which Clytemnestra persuades Agamemnon to walk on the tapestries with music which contrasts the ardent power of her urgings with the weakness of Agamemnon's evasive responses. Next comes an extremely intense setting of the scene in which Cassandra prophesies her own and Agamemnon's deaths, with a beautiful *arioso* lament at its center; this is arguably the finest scene in

19 On the socio-political aspects of the *Ring* cf. Shaw 1923 [1967]. They are marvelously realized in Patrice Chéreau's 1976 Centenary Production at Bayreuth.

20 For a detailed study of this opera see Belina and Ewans 2010.

the opera.<sup>21</sup> At the climax the spirits of the murdered children actually appear near the palace—a fine *coup de théâtre*.

But Taneyev's *Oresteia* is much more morally and ethically simple than Aeschylus', and this begins to emerge in the confrontation between Clytemnestra and the chorus over the bodies. In the opera we do not hear the queen's passionate defense that she is avenging the murder of her daughter (Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 1412ff.); nor do the chorus come to acknowledge, as do Aeschylus' Elders (1560ff.) that she may have some right on her side. In this new *Oresteia*, Clytemnestra is unequivocally evil, and this has serious consequences in the third and last Act.

Act II, *Cheophori* (*Libation Bearers*), is a highly effective adaptation of the dark center of Aeschylus' trilogy. Taneyev adds a powerful opening scene in which the specter of Agamemnon actually appears to Clytemnestra in a dream, and prophesies her imminent death. Like Lady Macbeth, she is polluted by her deed: "in vain the seas unite to wash clean my blood-stained hand." This is followed by an ensemble, in which Clytemnestra describes the dream to the chorus, while Electra is heard declaring that the angry dead "will not spare the guilty living." Taneyev's Electra is very different in character from her Aeschylean counterpart, who hesitates and has to be persuaded by the Libation Bearers to pray to Agamemnon for vengeance (*Cho.* 84ff.). As soon as Clytemnestra asks this Electra to take libations to the dead king, she resolves to "plead for vengeance, and not forgiveness. The just gods will not want to forgive the murderer."

The great *kommos* of lyric lamentation in which Aeschylus' singing actors playing Orestes, Electra, and the Libation Bearers invoke the spirit of Agamemnon and plead with him to aid their vengeance is omitted, presumably because its form is unsuitable for a modern operatic ensemble;<sup>22</sup> but Taneyev transforms Orestes' confident speech stating that the god Apollo will not forsake him into a powerful *arioso*, in which for the first time we hear the sublime, high, and lightly textured music which will recur in Act III. It is followed by a duet with chorus calling for vengeance, which goes some way to make up for the lack in the opera of the *kommos*.

21 Cf. Belina 2008.

22 Aeschylean choruses are gender-specific, and their character in each drama is chosen to fuel the gender conflict, which is a central feature of the *Oresteia*. Modern choruses must be mixed to provide a full harmonic texture—sopranos and contraltos together with tenors and basses. Also the stanzas in Aeschylus' choral odes, and in complex sequences like this *kommos*, are too long and sophisticated in their content to be transformed into effective operatic choruses.

The scene changes to in front of the palace doors, and the Act moves powerfully forward right up to the climactic encounter which Aeschylus created, but which no subsequent treatment of the Orestes myth had dramatized before Taneyev—the confrontation onstage in which Clytemnestra pleads for her life, and her son, after hesitating once, becomes implacable. This is set to extremely intense music. After the murders, Orestes declares, as in Aeschylus, that he will go to Delphi to expiate his crime; and, as in Aeschylus, the avenging Furies of his mother appear. But in the original they were invisible to all except Orestes; in another *coup de théâtre*, Taneyev's audience sees them drive him from the stage.

Unfortunately Act III, *Eumenides*, diverges far from Aeschylus. Apollo has already been associated with sublime music, high in violins and harps, when Orestes invoked him in Act II. When the final Act opens with Orestes being pursued by the Furies, there is a great contrast between their ugly and violent music and the sublime sounds which are heard as Orestes appeals to Apollo for help; these continue into the famous *entr'acte*, "The Temple of Apollo at Delphi," and the second Tableau, in which a noble and dignified Apollo drives the Furies from his temple. There is a complete contrast between this morally simple scene and the subtle complexity of Aeschylus; in the ancient Greek *Eumenides* (179ff.), the young and radiant male sun god belies his glorious appearance by becoming petulant and blustering under questioning, while the aged, dark, ugly, and female Furies are, for the most part, courteous, calm, and logical. Aeschylus develops this contrast between appearances and underlying reality into the trial scene, where Apollo resorts to sophistic arguments, threats, and bribery (614ff.), while the Furies are once again rational—though like Apollo they threaten the jurors (*Eumenides* 711–2).<sup>23</sup> And, at the close of the original *Oresteia*, the Furies take up a new home in Athens as honored residents, the "Solemn Goddesses" who will guarantee the future safety and strength of that city and preserve it from crime and civil war.

None of this, however, happens in Taneyev's opera. We do not see the trial of Orestes, and we see no more of the Furies after Apollo has driven them out of Delphi. Athena announces that she will acquit Orestes, to music that echoes Apollo's glowing textures and characteristic harp arpeggios, thereby making an implication, which Aeschylus studiously avoided, that Athena is aligned with Apollo. Athena then goes on to abolish the Furies, and—acting like a Christ-figure centuries ahead of his time—she prophesies the forgiveness

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23 They also break out into violent rage against Athena and Athens when the verdict is announced (778ff.)—a rage which she has great difficulty in quelling, even though she has the power of Zeus' thunderbolt in reserve (825–7).

of all mortals who repent of their sins, and calls for pity and forgiveness to replace “bloodshed in revenge”: “[may] love and justice be new law!” After this, the chorus ends the opera by singing to the glory of Athena as they process to the Acropolis.

Aeschylus was a realist, and he knew that the blood feud continued into his own day alongside the Areopagus and other institutions of justice. He also presented his audience in 458 BCE with an inclusive vision, in which the fearsome goddesses from the underworld are not despised but valued highly at Athens. Taneyev’s Athena abolishes the Furies, and invokes Christian concepts of repentance, pity, and mercy which would arouse a response in his Russian Orthodox audiences; but these alien concepts sit very uneasily on the substratum of ancient Greek ethics, taken over from Aeschylus, which underlies most of the opera until the closing tableau. The glorious power of the music in the Finale carries spectators away emotionally while they are watching, but, when this ending is given serious rational consideration, it is highly problematic. A simplistic vision of a patriarchal future society based on Christian principles, while it doubtless reflected the beliefs about religion and society of the Russian audience for whom the opera was intended, is a resolution totally incompatible with the complex ethical dilemmas which Aeschylus’ trilogy raised, and which had been carried over (though somewhat simplified) into the earlier parts of the opera.

### Fauré and Orff: *Prometheus*

*Prometheus Bound* is a static play with long rhetorical speeches in a simple, often prosaic and sometimes verbose style; it is generally regarded today, since Mark Griffith’s penetrating analysis, as the work not of Aeschylus but of a poet contemporary with Euripides, perhaps Aeschylus’ son Euphorion.<sup>24</sup> However, the hero’s noble defiance of the supreme god on behalf of mankind inspired many Romantic artists—including Shelley, who wrote a sequel entitled *Prometheus Unbound*<sup>25</sup>—and it is the subject of two unusual operas, one written by Gabriel Fauré and the other by Karl Orff.

*Prometheus Bound* begins with the appearance of Kratos (Power) and Bia (Violence), two agents of Zeus, bringing Prometheus to a remote, uninhabited mountain; Kratos urges the reluctant Hephaistos to fasten Prometheus to a rock, as his punishment for stealing fire from the gods and giving it to men.

<sup>24</sup> Griffith 1977; cf. Ewans 1996, liv–lix.

<sup>25</sup> See Desset, this volume.

When Prometheus is left alone, he is soon joined by the chorus of the Oceanides (daughters of Ocean), who sympathize with him; next their father comes to give some gratuitous, expedient advice to Prometheus, who rejects it. Then, Io arrives on the scene. Hera has punished Io because Zeus desired her; she has been partially transformed into the shape of a cow and is tormented by a gadfly. Prometheus prophesies her future wanderings and her eventual release to found a dynasty in Egypt. Finally Hermes appears, angered by Prometheus' stubborn defiance of Zeus and his threats to bring about Zeus' downfall. The Oceanides suddenly and surprisingly defy Hermes as well, when he threatens that Prometheus will imminently be obliterated. At the close of the play thunder is heard, and a cataclysmic earthquake buries both Prometheus and the Oceanides.

### *Fauré: Prométhée*

A rich local proprietor funded the restoration of the vast amphitheater called the Arena at Béziers, in the wine-growing area of central France, and Saint-Saëns, together with playwright Louis Gallet, wrote a tragedy with incidental music, *Déjanire*, which was successfully performed there before a large audience in 1898. After its success that year and in 1899, Saint-Saëns was asked to write a sequel, but he declined and recommended that Fauré should be commissioned in his place to produce a new work for 1900. Prometheus was chosen for the subject, and Cora Laparcerie, the actress who was to play Pandore, suggested the librettists, André-Ferdinand Hérold and Jean Lorrain.<sup>26</sup> Fauré scored his opera for immense forces to match the open-air performance space; three wind bands totaling 300 players, 100 strings, and thirteen harps.<sup>27</sup>

Nectoux claims that the librettists "relied heavily on their Aeschylean model," but in fact, their text, which alternates between spoken dialogue and song like a Greek tragedy,<sup>28</sup> takes only the basic situation, the opening scene, and some of the characters from *Prometheus Bound*. Oceanos and Io are omitted, and the Oceanides do not appear until the third Act. The scenario begins before the action of the Greek original; Fauré composed a powerful opening scene for mixed chorus with two chorus leaders, Andros and Aenoé, who have

26 Details in Nectoux 1991, 192–5.

27 After the work's great success at Béziers, it was performed at an open-air space in Paris with poor acoustics in 1907, but *Prométhée* only succeeded in the capital when Fauré's pupil Roger-Ducasse re-orchestrated it for indoor performance by a normal operatic orchestra; after the 1917 première of this version at the Opéra, it received over 40 performances in the next few years.

28 1991, 196. The roles of Prométhée, Pandore and Hermes are for speaking actors.

important solo lines, in which primitive humanity celebrates Prometheus for giving them fire (and hope). Then comes the first new character, Pandore (Pandora), who provides the love interest. After her scene with Prométhée, he is confronted by the earth-goddess, Gaia, who emerges from a cavern and condemns him for blasphemy against Zeus. He rejects the attempts by both Gaia and Pandore to dissuade him and climbs to a prominent rock to steal fire; as he does this, the chorus sings his praises. Then, suddenly, Kratos and Bia arrive, bringing Hephaistos, who sings a short *aria* pitying Prométhée for his imminent punishment.

Puzzlingly, Act I ends there—midway through the reworking of the opening scene from *Prometheus Bound*. Act II opens with a lament for Prométhée; a very *fin-de-siècle* vision of antiquity, with graceful, white-garbed women singing the plaintive choral lament.<sup>29</sup> Then, the binding-scene resumes (the action is now located in wildest, remote Scythia); Hephaistos laments again as he binds Prométhée savagely to the rock. Pandore then awakes, and, while Bia tells her to leave, she weeps for the captive Prométhée.

In Act III Pandore summons the Oceanides, and, as in the original Greek play, they come to sympathize with Prométhée in three extended, sensual choral numbers. Prométhée now engages in a bitter spoken dialogue with Pandore, who again tries to persuade him to give in. Kratos and Bia reappear, and threaten Pandore with the same fate as her hero. Prométhée remains resolute: “I am the master of the future.” As at the end of *Prometheus Bound*, there is a thunderbolt, but in *Prométhée*, it is not followed by a cataclysm. Suddenly, all the gods appear on the topmost peak. Hermes holds a casket and announces that Heracles will eventually liberate Prométhée.<sup>30</sup> Prométhée, however, denounces the “cowardly gods.” Pandore takes the casket and descends to the other human beings gathered below, and the *tragédie lyrique* closes with the full chorus expressing their adoration of the gods.

This libretto avoids the long monologues in the Greek original, but its new plot contains considerable incoherence and the poetic style has not worn well. But Fauré’s music is of high quality—a strange combination of large-scale effects for massed brass with delicate interludes and female choruses. It is original and powerful—and it was greeted with great enthusiasm and critical

29 *Prométhée* is worlds away from the new vision of ancient Greece, inspired by Nietzsche and Freud, which Hofmannsthal and Strauss were to unleash in *Elektra* in 1909 (Ewans 2007, 81–104).

30 This also happened in the sequel to *Prometheus Bound*, *Prometheus Freed*, of which fragments survive.

acclaim. Over 17,000 people were in the audience for the two performances in 1900, and this success was repeated the next year.

### *Orff: Prometheus*

For Carl Orff “the word ... was a musical object, a piece of material for composition. He heard in speech sound-colours and rhythms, the altering sounds of vowels and the accents of consonants, which are treated directly as musical phenomena.”<sup>31</sup> Some years after he had set Hölderlin’s very literal and convoluted translations of Sophocles’ *Antigone* (1948–9) and *Oedipus* (1959), Orff took what, given this belief, was the logical next step: he set *Prometheus Bound* uncut in the original Greek, so that he could experience and respond to the original Greek poet’s fusion of sound and meaning. His version was first performed in 1968, and was recorded at concert performances in Munich under the baton of Rafael Kubelik in 1975.

Orff’s *Prometheus* is an unusual setting in more ways than one. A large amount of the text is set as unaccompanied declamation, and the orchestra consists only of an extensive and exotic array of percussion, together with some wind and brass instruments, double basses (often used to provide a held note under declamation) and harp. This orchestra is used largely for punctuation; at dramatic moments in the dialogue, powerful primitive rhythmic sounds, which at times are rather simplistic and obvious,<sup>32</sup> crash in to punctuate between the sung words, and often continue under the next few lines of dialogue.<sup>33</sup> Some words and syllables are highlighted in the setting, either by the use of melisma or by percussive comments. For example,

31 Dibelius, cited by Leonhardt 2011, 85.

32 As for example in the music depicting the gadfly’s pursuit of Io.

33 The trend towards primitive percussive sounds as an accompaniment to Greek tragedy was initiated by Darius Milhaud in his 1915 settings of parts of Aeschylus’ *Libation Bearers*. “[This was] meant to create an aura of authenticity for the modern staging of ancient drama. It evokes a world outside Western culture and history, imagined as more intimately communal and held together by archaic ritual” (Wolff 2010, 289). A similar aural conception of Greek tragedy was evident, more recently, in Peter Hall’s 1981 National Theatre of Great Britain production of the *Oresteia*. A translation by Tony Harrison, consisting of short, often crudely rhymed lines, was accompanied and punctuated by Harrison Birtwhistle’s intrusive, abrasive and percussive score. But the objections to this kind of re-creation of Greek tragedy are obvious. The ancient Athenians did not use percussion in their performances; their world is *not* outside of Western culture and history, but rather is one of its foundations; and the ritual elements in Greek tragedy were *not* archaic for the original spectators.



Prometheus' *paschō* ("I suffer") at 93 is quite excessively extended by melisma, and extended melismata of lamentation precede and punctuate Io's story.<sup>34</sup> These cries are not in the Greek original, though it does not lack notated outcries elsewhere. In general, the setting of the long speeches, which the author of *Prometheus Bound* clearly loved, is well handled and sometimes quite imaginative given the limitations of Orff's chosen style. Despite his greater interest in the sheer sound of the original Greek words, he usually shows sensitivity to their meaning. However, some lines are set literally monotonously, missing the emotion which is present in the text. For example, there is no hint in the musical setting of the chorus leader's obvious surprise at 253, when she learns that, thanks to Prometheus, human beings now possess fire. And the mood established for some of the choral odes, especially the last, in which the Oceanides, appalled by the fate of Io, pray that the eye of a god may never light on them with desire, is strange and does not (to me) capture the mood implied by the text. Also the decision to present the closing dialogue between Hermes and Prometheus in spoken words feels odd, especially during the last phase, where in the original text Hermes, Prometheus, and the chorus all rise to the extra level of tension signaled in Greek tragedy by the use of anapests.

This opera inhabits a unique sound-world. The decision to set every word of the original play leads to some longueurs in its running time of well over two hours, but there are some fine moments. Not surprisingly, given the prominent role of the percussion, these moments include the opening scene where Kratos and Bia command Hephaistos to chain Prometheus to the rock and Hephaistos, after doing this, pierces him with an adamantine spike through the chest. Also the closing cataclysm, in which Prometheus' last speech is set very powerfully, and screams from the Oceanides are followed by a tumultuous outburst from the orchestra. Listeners must judge whether the felicitous moments in this unusual and dramatically static opera outweigh the longueurs.<sup>35</sup>

34 cf. also e.g. 193, 219, 458.

35 Other works based on *Prometheus Bound* in the twentieth century include a "scenic oratorio" by Rudolf Wagner-Regény (Salzburg and Berlin 1993, Milan 2000) and an experimental opera by Luigi Nono (*Prometeo*, Venice 1984 and La Scala Milan 1985). On Nono's opera cf. Brown 2004, 302. For some semi-operatic works based on *Prometheus Bound* between 1969 and 2002 cf. Brown 2004, 301.

## The *Oresteia* in the Twentieth Century

The twentieth century has seen quite a few attempts to set either *Agamemnon* or the whole *Oresteia*.<sup>36</sup> Almost none of them have been published. Except for Felix Werder's Melbourne 1977 "music theatre" *Agamemnon*, which was issued on a vinyl disc, none of them has been recorded. Only a handful even achieved more than one performance or series of performances. An exception is Vittorio Gneccchi's *Cassandra*.<sup>37</sup> Iannis Xenakis' *Oresteia* (Athens 1992; Covent Garden 2000, presented by the English Bach Festival Opera) is not a full dramatization in music of Aeschylus' trilogy but a setting of several extracts. Also worth noting are Felix Weingartner's *Oresteia* (Leipzig 1902), Ernst Křenek's *Leben des Orest* (Leipzig 1930), and John Eaton's *The Cry of Clytemnestra* (which after a tryout at Indiana University in 1980 was performed in San Francisco in 1981). Although never subsequently revived, these operas did attract some favourable mention at the time of their first performances.

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36 For a full and up to date catalogue go to <http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/research-collections/performance-database/productions>, then select "Aeschylus," the play in which you are interested, and "operas and musicals" as the limiter.

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### *Selected Recordings*

- Fauré, *Prométhée*. No recording currently available.
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Taneyev *Oresteia*. The CDs recorded by the Belorussian State Opera Company (Olympia label), are hard to find and present a version with many cuts, which make it difficult to appreciate Taneyev's opera fully.

Wagner *The Nibelung's Ring*. The essential socio-political aspects have never been brought out so clearly as in Patrice Chéreau's Centenary Production at Bayreuth (1976), issued on DVD by DGG.

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# Aeschylus in Germany

Theodore Ziolkowski

## Introduction

The renown of Aeschylus in Germany, both scholarly and theatrical, is largely a twentieth-century phenomenon. When the classicist Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf published his translation of the *Oresteia* in 1900, he was convinced that “Aeschylus was virtually as good as unknown and, even among philologists, not properly studied and appreciated.”<sup>1</sup> His impression appears to be confirmed by the fact that the first performance of an Aeschylean drama (*Prometheus Bound*) on a public stage (in contrast to occasional renditions in schools) took place in 1896 when, according to a contemporary review, the public was “wretchedly bored,” even though two other classical tragedies, Sophocles’ *Oedipus* and *Antigone*, enjoyed considerable stature<sup>2</sup>—owing in part, perhaps, to Hegel’s extended treatment of *Antigone* in his *Phänomenologie des Geistes* as a model for the ethical world of pure spirit and to the many translations of the work by prominent writers, from Hölderlin’s *Antigonä* (1804) down to Bertolt Brecht’s adaptation and Carl Orff’s musicalization of that version (1949).<sup>3</sup>

## The First Wave (1770–1815)

Aeschylus was of course not wholly unknown to earlier readers. The monumentality of his figures, his archaic harshness, and his religiosity had repelled the generations of Enlightenment and Rococo,<sup>4</sup> but by the late eighteenth century it was precisely the dark power of his dramas that appealed to writers of the Storm and Stress, the German literary movement of the 1770s, which rejected the prevailing Enlightenment and Rococo worship of sheer beauty in favor of

1 Wilamowitz-Moellendorf 1929, 255.

2 Flashar 2009, 103, 80.

3 “Between c. 1790 and c. 1905, it was widely held by European poets, philosophers, and scholars that Sophocles’ *Antigone* was not only the finest of Greek tragedies, but a work of art nearer to perfection than any other produced by the human spirit” (Steiner 1986, 1).

4 Nestle 1950, x.

the sublime. As Schiller, following Kant's distinction in his *Critique of Judgment* (1790, §23), put it in his representative essay "On the Sublime" (most probably from the early 1790s), "The sublime provides us with an outlet from the sensuous world in which the beautiful would like to hold us captive forever."<sup>5</sup> The works of Aeschylus appealed precisely to this new veneration of the sublime.

The earliest indications of this turn were not translations of the dramas but two unusual literary adaptations. In 1769 the Swiss aesthetician and professor of history, Johann Jakob Bodmer (1698–1783), who owes his place in literary history to his role in the epoch-making controversy with the German Francophile critic and theatrical reformer Johann Christoph Gottsched (1700–1766), published a three-volume edition of his "political plays" containing a biographical drama featuring Aeschylus and his family in the hours immediately preceding the Persian attack on Athens (*Rettung in den Mauern von Holz*). Those same volumes also included *Karl von Burgund*, a play based on the defeat in 1476 of Charles the Bold of Burgundy by the Swiss and amounting to a detailed post-figuration or contrafact of *Persians* "after Aeschylus" in which Athens is represented by Berne, Xerxes by Duke Charles, and the chorus by Burgundian noblemen.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, the Prometheus theme was so prevalent among writers and thinkers of the late eighteenth century that the theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar chose to entitle his history of German idealism simply *Prometheus* (1947). But that popularity should not be misunderstood as a tribute to Aeschylus. The Enlightenment novelist Christoph Martin Wieland (1733–1813), to be sure, specifically cites Aeschylus in the dream dialogue (1770) that he imagines with the chained Titan,<sup>7</sup> but he is concerned with Prometheus not as Aeschylus depicts him but, rather, as the Ovidian creator of human beings from clay. One of Johann Wolfgang Goethe's (1749–1832) most famous early hymns ("Prometheus," 1774) during his Storm-and-Stress years, which produced notably his novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), is a tirade launched against Zeus by the Titan as he sits on earth and fashions men in his image. When in 1802 the theologian and philosopher of history Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), who had earlier placed Aeschylus beside Homer,<sup>8</sup> published thirteen scenes of his *Der entfesselte Prometheus*, he explicitly stated that his work was not intended as competition with Aeschylus. "Who in our

5 Schiller 1967, 5: 799. On the impact of the sublime on European thought and art generally see Nicolson 1963, 369.

6 Beck 1937, 9–17.

7 2008, 202.

8 Melchinger 1974, 451.

age would dare to continue Prometheus' character as Aeschylus depicts him?"<sup>9</sup> As late as in his lectures on aesthetics (1818–30) G. W. F. Hegel's discussion of Prometheus was based entirely on Plato's *Protagoras*.<sup>10</sup> Generally speaking, however, the widespread acquaintance with the myth was attributable not to the Greek sources—Hesiod, Aeschylus, Plato—but to the newly fashionable encyclopedias and such handy reference works as Hederich's *Gründliches Mythologisches Lexikon*.<sup>11</sup> In fact, Goethe was unfamiliar with Aeschylus' drama until 1781; in his autobiography he spoke only of "the ancient mythological figure" whose "titanic-gigantic, heaven-storming sense" appealed to him.<sup>12</sup>

Within a decade, however, the interest of the intellectual elite was turning to Aeschylus. In 1781 Goethe persuaded the young Swiss scholar Georg Christoph Tobler (1757–1812), himself a former student of Bodmer's, to undertake a translation of Aeschylus,<sup>13</sup> and he was present that summer when Tobler read his version of *Die Perser* aloud to a group in Weimar.<sup>14</sup> Storm and Stress is evident also in the attitude of the young aristocrat Friedrich Leopold Stolberg (1750–1819), who confessed to his brother Christian that "the titanic Greek has driven me with his hot rays from cliff to cliff ... I have lit many a torch from his lightning bolts." But he qualifies his feelings: "Just as I regard Sophocles as a greater dramatist, Aeschylus is for me in his choral odes, especially in the great dithyrambic ones, the greatest lyrical poet, much fierier than even Pindar."<sup>15</sup> In 1784 Stolberg, who two years earlier had translated four of the dramas—*Prometheus in Banden*, *Sieben gegen Theben*, *Die Perser*, *Die Eumeniden* (published collectively in 1802)—reported that Goethe had asked to see something from his translations, saying that Aeschylus was "after Homer his favorite writer,"<sup>16</sup> and promised to send him a copy of his *Eumeniden*. When Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805), after his own graduation from his youthful Storm and Stress to his mature Weimar classicism, read Stolberg's translations twenty years later, he wrote that "nothing previously has produced within me such a genuinely poetic and elevated mood," and he recounted to Wilhelm von Humboldt that the translation "has given me a lofty impression of Aeschylus,

9 Herder 1967, 28: 329.

10 Hegel 1966, 1: 444–7.

11 Bremer 1988, 161, 155.

12 Goethe 1948–64, 10: 48–9.

13 Boyle 1991, 354.

14 Steiger 1983, 2: 438.

15 Beck 1937, 52.

16 Stolberg 1891, 108–9.

no matter how much of his spirit may have gotten lost.”<sup>17</sup> In his ballad “Die Kraniche des Ibykus” (1797) Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* is being performed when the two murderers of Ibykus are discovered. And while he was composing his “tragedy with choruses,” *Die Braut von Messina* (1803), he wrote to his friend Körner that the work “is really turning into an Aeschylean tragedy.”<sup>18</sup>

But by any odds *Agamemnon*, which Stolberg found too difficult to translate (Stolberg 1891, 411), was the favorite work of those years. In 1788 Schiller declared that it was “one of the loveliest works that ever came from a poet’s mind” and “a real treat” (“Leckerbissen”).<sup>19</sup> In 1791 he announced that he was “translating” *Agamemnon* for his projected collection of “The Tragic Theater of the Greeks.”<sup>20</sup> Since Schiller’s Greek was rudimentary, his renditions were based largely on Latin translations and the prose versions in Pierre Brumoy’s *Le Théâtre des Grecs*.<sup>21</sup> The humanist Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835), Prussian minister of culture and education and founder of the University of Berlin, labored for twenty years on his translation of the *Agamemnon*, which, as he remarked in his introduction, “no other among all the works of the Greek stage approaches in tragic grandeur.”<sup>22</sup> In addition to the poetry of the work, and notably its choral odes, Humboldt appreciated the manner in which Aeschylus succeeded in eradicating every “merely human and earthly” element in order to render “the pure symbol of human destiny, the just reign of the deity, of eternally vindicating doom.” When the translation finally appeared in 1816, Goethe, who had first encountered the tragedy in 1781 in Tobler’s version, thanked Humboldt for his work, calling it “one of the most worthy of contemplation.”<sup>23</sup>

It was not only the Weimar classicists who were captivated by Aeschylus. The brothers Schlegel, the two most prominent Romantic theoreticians and critics, were also admirers.<sup>24</sup> In 1808 August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767–1845), who served as the key source for Mme Germaine de Staël’s celebrated work *De l’Allemagne* (1810), delivered his influential Vienna “Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature”—rapidly translated into French (1814), English (1815), and Italian (1817)—in which he devoted an entire session (the sixth) to Aeschylus,

17 Jonas 1892–6, 7: 2, 14.

18 Jonas 1892–6, 6: 414.

19 Jonas 1892–6, 2: 171, 180.

20 Schiller 1965, 3: 163.

21 Butler 1958, 169.

22 Humboldt 1816, iii

23 Goethe 1962–7, 3: 361.

24 On the Schlegels’ influence in the broader European context, see Wellek 1955, 5–73.



who “in one gigantic step raised tragedy from its crude beginnings to that dignified form that we encounter in his works.”<sup>25</sup> He goes on to call him “the Phidias of the tragic art” and “the creator of tragedy” (73). Although his plans are simple and he did not yet understand how to organize a plot richly and complexly” (73), he will remain “forever unexcelled in his almost superhuman grandeur” (87). Unlike the earlier critics, Schlegel stresses the fact that Aeschylus left, “what is infinitely remarkable: a complete trilogy” (74), and devotes a full analysis to the first and third.<sup>26</sup> To achieve his effect, Schlegel reasons, Clytemnestra could not be portrayed as a weak, seduced woman but had to be depicted “with characteristics of that heroic age that is so rich in bloody catastrophes, where all passions were so powerful and the figures in both good and evil transcended the normal measure of those races that later became so much smaller” (78). The poet makes no attempt to embellish the crimes depicted or to reduce our abhorrence: Agamemnon is equally culpable. The *Oresteia*, he sums up, is “surely one of the most sublime poetic works to which ever the human imagination has elevated itself and probably the most mature and complete among all the products of his genius” (83). Schlegel then goes on to discuss in considerable detail the other plays as well as reports of the poet’s life, including the rumor that he was accused of betraying secrets of the Eleusinian mysteries. “Perhaps he believed that initiation into the mysteries was already contained in the poetic expression, and thus nothing was revealed to anyone who was not worthy of it” (87).

August Wilhelm’s younger brother, the poet and critic Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829), the most eminent theoretician of German Romanticism and noted especially for his renewal of the debate over the ancients and moderns, was equally enthusiastic. In the first of his 1812 lectures in Vienna on “The History of Ancient and Modern Literature” he opined that Aeschylus’ greatness as a poet, to which was adjoined his seriousness as a thinker, was evident “in the representation of the frightful and the tragic passions.”<sup>27</sup> Like his brother, he justifies the poet’s alleged betrayal of the Eleusinian mysteries through his profound search for truth (33). Accordingly, in his *Prometheus* one senses a poetic as well as a moral sublimity. “Everywhere in Aeschylus the gigantic figures of primal times loom forth” and the poet himself “engages in the mighty battle

25 A. W. Schlegel 1966, 72.

26 He leaves his discussion of *The Libation Bearers* until a later lecture, where he takes up the treatment of the same theme by Sophocles and Euripides.

27 F. Schlegel 1961, 32.

between the ancient chaos and the idea of laws and harmonious order" (33). Almost anticipating Nietzsche's opposition of the Dionysian and Apollonian, Schlegel observes that Aeschylus' poetry "stands in the middle between the wild power of nature and the profundity of original heathenism, and the later movement toward rationality of the cultivated peoples"—a conflict in the ancient world that emerges most clearly in Aeschylus. So, it is hardly a surprise when he explains the intention of his drama *Alarcos* (1803) "to be a tragedy in the ancient sense of the word (principally, according to the ideal of Aeschylus), but with a Romantic subject and costume."<sup>28</sup>

### Mid-Century Re-Evaluations

Despite the adulation of the Weimar classicists and the critical initiative of the Romantics, Aeschylus during those decades remained essentially an inside secret of the cultural elite. It was only in 1832, the year of Goethe's death, that the situation began to change with the publication of Johann Gustav Droysen's translation into German trimeters of Aeschylus' seven dramas, which was accompanied by a thorough introduction and notes. Droysen (1808–84), a student in Berlin of the great classicist August Böckh, soon shifted his admiration from Sophocles to Aeschylus. "Sophocles is the great artist," he wrote, "but how remote he is from the magnificent scope of vision, from the deeper inner unrest of the most urgent questions, from the inexorable severity to tear away the veil."<sup>29</sup> In particular, Droysen, like Bodmer before him, became aware of the political dimension of the dramas, attracted as he was initially to *Persians* by the events of the contemporary Greek wars of liberation—a standpoint that led him to identify in the *Oresteia* parallels to contemporary German history and politics. In this spirit, then, the young classicist undertook his translation in the hope of introducing Aeschylus, hitherto unknown outside scholarly circles, to "the cultivated and receptive mind" of a broader public.<sup>30</sup> His hope was more than adequately fulfilled, for his translations provided the basis for much of Aeschylus' growing popularity in the course of the nineteenth century.

The classically educated Karl Marx (1818–1883) still read Aeschylus in the original. The preface of his doctoral dissertation (1841) cites five lines in Greek from *Prometheus Bound*, beginning with the famous utterance: "In a word, I

28 Fr. Schlegel 1963, 1: 60.

29 Nestle 1950, xix.

30 Nestle 1950, xxiii.

hate all gods" (l. 975). His preface ends with the blunt statement: "Prometheus is the noblest saint and martyr in the philosophical calendar."<sup>31</sup> A quarter-century later in *Das Kapital* (1867) Marx returned to the image of Prometheus, this time without reference to Aeschylus, but in a context that catalyzed many later Marxist works. The law, he claims there (ch. 23), "binds the worker more firmly to capital than the wedges of Hephaestus fetter Prometheus to his cliff,"<sup>32</sup> an image that exemplifies a principal theme of his economic theory.

Richard Wagner (1813–1883), whose infatuation with Greek culture began when as a child he heard accounts of the Greek wars of independence, never advanced far enough in his study of the language to read Aeschylus in the original and was wholly dependent on Droysen's translation and notes for his familiarity with his works.<sup>33</sup> In his autobiography he describes his initial acquaintance with the trilogy:

Especially Droysen's eloquent notes [Wagner uses the term "*didaskalia*"] helped me to introduce the intoxicating image of Athenian tragedy productions so vividly to my imagination that I could feel the *Oresteia* exerting its effect upon me as though it were actually being performed. Nothing could equal the sublime emotion that the *Agamemnon* aroused in me, and to the last word of the *Eumenides* I remained in a state of remoteness from the present from which I have never since been really able to reconcile myself with modern literature.<sup>34</sup>

In his essay on *Art and Revolution* (1849) he argued, in the footsteps of Droysen, that:

Greek art, like the noblest men of the Greek state, was essentially conservative, and Aeschylus is the most significant expression of that conservatism: his most splendid artwork is the *Oresteia*, with which he opposed himself simultaneously to the young Sophocles as a poet and to the revolutionary Pericles as statesman.<sup>35</sup>

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31 Marx 1975, 14–5.

32 Marx n.d., 572.

33 Ewans 1982, 16, 27.

34 Wagner 1986, 1: 393–4.

35 Wagner 1914, 10: 33–4.

Anticipating Nietzsche, he concludes that “the defeat of Aeschylus was the first step downward from the height of Greek tragedy, the first moment of the dissolution of the Athenian state.” He returned to the trilogy frequently and, in 1880, read the plays aloud to his wife Cosima, who reported that she had never before seen him like that, “transfigured, inspired, completely at one with what he is reading.”<sup>36</sup>

Today it is generally agreed that Wagner’s *Ring*-cycle was inspired by the structure of the *Oresteia* as a cycle of separate mythic actions (in his case taken from Norse rather than Greek myth) depicting human error, revenge, and expiation—a reading influenced profoundly by Wagner’s study of Droysen’s interpretations.<sup>37</sup> While some critics also attribute the psychology of the work to Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* and Droysen’s theoretical reconstruction of the trilogy to which it belonged,<sup>38</sup> that view is rejected by others.<sup>39</sup>

A near contemporary of Marx and Wagner, the legal historian, judge, and Basle professor Johann Jakob Bachofen (1815–1887), was introduced to his field in Berlin by such distinguished scholars as the classicist August Böckh, the legal historian Friedrich Karl Savigny, and the historian Leopold Ranke. But his work led him in a wholly original direction. Already in his inaugural lecture on the contrasts between natural law and historical law (“Das Naturrecht und das geschichtliche Recht in ihren Gegensätzen,” 1841) Bachofen had cited a phrase that predicted his future obsession: the oracular statement to Aeneas in Virgil’s *Aeneid* (III.96), “Antiquam exquirite matrem” (“Seek the ancient mother”).<sup>40</sup> Bachofen is known today principally for his fundamental study of matriarchy, *Das Mutterrecht* (1861). In that epoch-making work he devotes three chapters in the section on Athens (§§25–27) to an explanation of his theory on the basis of Aeschylus’ *Eumenides*; and in the course of his discussion he quotes extensively from Droysen’s translation.<sup>41</sup> The Erinyes, he argues, know only matriarchal law, in contrast to Apollo, who speaks for the new patriarchal system, which now replaces the primal matriarchy. In the next section (§26), Bachofen considers the lines in which Athena recalls that the Amazons, the embodiment of a matriarchal system and who were subsequently defeated by Theseus, once pitched their tents on the Areopagus, where this final scene takes place and where Athenian patriarchal law was established. He concludes

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36 Ewans 1982, 17.

37 Ewans 1982, 30.

38 Melchinger 1974, 454; Riedel 2000, 243.

39 Ewans 1982, 256–60.

40 Rudolf Marx 1954, vii.

41 Bachofen 1948, 177–99.

(§27) with reflections, based on Orestes' prayer of thanks to Athena, on the opposition between the heavenly Olympian law of the father and the chthonic subterranean law of the mother as embodied by the Erinyes.

Following these political, economic, musical, and historical adaptations Friedrich Nietzsche added yet another dimension of understanding to Aeschylus' works: the mythic-philosophical. While still a fifteen-year old student at the renowned Schulpforta, Nietzsche (1844–1900) became acquainted with Aeschylus and wrote a one-act *Prometheus* in which the Titan embodies the powerlessness of the individual before the might of the gods. In his recollections of his two years at the University of Leipzig (1865–67) he recalled his enthusiasm at the teaching of Friedrich Ritschl, who had earlier been his professor at the University of Bonn and who now opened his initial lecture series with a lecture on Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*—lectures that Nietzsche attended and faithfully transcribed.<sup>42</sup> Later his own initial lectures as a young professor in Basle (1869) dealt with Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*. The fact that he had only six students and, when he presented the same lectures again in 1872 and 1874, only seven and four students respectively, suggests that, even among prospective classicists, Aeschylus had still not achieved his later stature.<sup>43</sup>

It is against this background that we should read Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), which bears on its title page an image of the liberated Prometheus and where the thought is permeated by Aeschylus. Indeed, the figure of Prometheus occurs almost leitmotiv-ically throughout the work. We learn that the "titanic powers of nature," against which the Greeks nurtured such mistrust, were exemplified by the vulture that gnawed at Prometheus, "the great friend of mankind" and that Prometheus was torn apart by those vultures "because of his titanic love of humankind."<sup>44</sup> Nietzsche states that "tragedy arose from the tragic chorus and was originally only chorus and nothing but chorus"—a chorus whose classical form is familiar to us from Aeschylus and Sophocles (1:44). He praises "the glory of action" that surrounds Aeschylus' Prometheus in contrast to the "glory of passivity" that characterizes Sophocles' Oedipus—a view that Aeschylus suggests through his images and that Goethe exposed in the bold words of *his* Prometheus (1:57). He notes "the astonishing boldness" with which Aeschylus places the Olympian world on his scales of justice (1:58). At this point he reaches his major conclusion: while the Aeschylean Prometheus with his glory of action and sense of mystery is

42 Nietzsche 1956, 3: 131.

43 Nietzsche 1956, 3: 362–6.

44 Nietzsche 1956, 1: 30, 34.

“a Dionysian mask,” his profound sense of justice betrays Aeschylus’ paternal heritage from Apollo (1:60).

Nietzsche goes on to contrast Aeschylus, in whom the Dionysian and Apollonian are in balance, with Euripides, “who in a certain sense was only a mask: the divinity that spoke from within him was not Dionysus and also not Apollo, but a wholly newborn *daimon* named Socrates” (1:71). It was this hyper-rational Socratic tendency “with which Euripides struggled and overcame the Aeschylean tragedy.” Whereas “the Aeschylean-Sophoclean tragedy applied the most ingenious means of art in order to play all the necessary threads of understanding into the viewer’s hands in the opening scenes,” Euripides simply placed a prologue before the exposition to explain everything in advance (1:73–4). In this way Euripides succeeded in undermining the function of the chorus, which had been the source of all tragedy, and thus in destroying the essence of tragedy, which resides in the tenuous balance of the Dionysian and the Apollonian.

Nietzsche’s admiration of Aeschylus obviously colored his friendship with Wagner and contributed to his discussion of Wagner’s operas in the later sections of *The Birth of Tragedy*, where he states that Wagner’s position vis-à-vis history resembles that of the Greeks toward myth: “something that one forms and poeticizes, with love and a certain shy reverence, but also with the sovereign right of the creative mind”<sup>45</sup>—a view notably at odds with the more politicizing attitude of Droysen. “Never,” he wrote in 1875, contrasting the composer with “the objective-castrated philologists,” “has an ancient work had so powerful an effect as did the *Oresteia* on Wagner.”<sup>46</sup>

Nietzsche concludes his monograph by imagining an elderly Athenian, gazing up “with the sublime eye of Aeschylus” at a modern who praises Apollo for healing the “dithyrambic madness” and saying: “How much did this people have to suffer in order to become so beautiful! Now follow me to the tragedy and sacrifice with me in the temple of both deities” (1:134). In sum, for Nietzsche, Aeschylus symbolizes a Dionysian-Promethean energy that is controlled by the Apollonian measure that we encounter in *The Eumenides*. We can now understand the remark that he inscribed in notes of 1875, lamenting that “Aeschylus lived and battled in vain: he came too late. That is the tragic in Greek history: the *greatest*, like Demosthenes, come too late to elevate the populace. Aeschylus attests a peak of the Greek mind that dies out with him.”<sup>47</sup>

45 Nietzsche 1956, 1: 377.

46 Nietzsche 1999, 8: 69.

47 Nietzsche 1956, 343.

## Twentieth-Century Popularizations

All these factors—Droysen's political, Marx's economic, Bachofen's historical, Wagner's musical, and Nietzsche's glorification of Aeschylus at the expense of Euripides—contributed to the cultural background that, by the end of the nineteenth century, made it possible for Aeschylus to move to the front of Germany's cultural and intellectual consciousness. This occurred initially through the mediation of Wilamowitz's new and timely translations. Promptly in 1900 his *Oresteia* enjoyed a sold-out premiere in Berlin's Theater des Westens in a stage adaptation by Hans Oberländer and with music by Max von Schilling.<sup>48</sup> That same year an adaptation by Paul Schlenther had a "grandiose success" in Vienna's Burgtheater. In 1911 Max Reinhardt staged a widely acclaimed version in Munich's Musikfesthalle, and a year later "the Aeschylus renaissance reached its spectacular apex" with performances in Berlin's Schumann Circus, to whose arena Reinhardt turned in order to accommodate the "cyclopic walls" and huge chorus (with 500 extras!) that he required for an occasion that stirred worldwide comment.<sup>49</sup>

World War I put an end to these extravaganzas, but by this time the *Oresteia* had embedded itself in the German cultural consciousness. Ilse Langner (1899–1987), whom the critic Alfred Kerr had labeled "Penthesilesia" (because she came from Silesia), had already written a comedy entitled *Die Amazonen* (1933) before she turned to the theme that obsessed her for some fifteen years: a prose drama entitled *Der Mord in Mykene* (written 1934), which she eventually rewrote as a three-act and strongly anti-war verse drama, *Klytämnestra* (1947), in which the heroine is a wise and beloved ruler of her land.<sup>50</sup> Langner did not take up the remaining two dramas of the Aeschylean trilogy, composing instead three different versions of the legend of Iphigenia on Tauris.

During those same years Gerhart Hauptmann (1862–1946) was drafting the plays of what became known as his *Atridentetralogie*. In the spring of 1907 Hauptmann (1862–1946) had made an extended trip through Greece and, in his journal (*Griechischer Frühling*, 1908), recorded his first impressions of the Argive plain:

This landscape appears at first glance a bit bare, a bit sober in its spaciousness. I am not inclined to address it as the home of those bloody shades that wander restlessly through the millennia under the names of

48 Flashar 2009, 112.

49 Melchinger 1974, 466–7; Flashar 2009, 123.

50 Schaller 2001, 147–72; Ziolkowski 2008, 31–9.

Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, Aegisthus, and Orestes. Their home was in the head of Aeschylus and Sophocles.<sup>51</sup>

He goes on to define his rather Nietzschean conception of tragedy “*cum grano salis* as a breakthrough of the subterranean powers or as an advance of those powers into the light. What I mean by that is tragedy since Aeschylus, of whom it is said that it was he who wove serpents into the hair of the Erinyes.”

When he returned to that material over thirty years later his view appears initially to have changed.<sup>52</sup> Inspired by a passage in Goethe, he first wrote his *Iphigenie in Delphi* (1940), which ends in reconciliation and harmony with Apollo’s absolution of Orestes and Electra and with Iphigenia’s self-sacrificial suicide—a presentation that reflected Hauptmann’s own hopes for a world of peace and stability under Hitler’s aegis. But when he subsequently decided to deal with the preceding actions leading up to that conclusion, the mood changed drastically. In *Iphigenie in Aulis* (1943), which, written against the background of World War II, required over two years and nine drafts, the atmosphere is dark and dominated no longer by Apollo but by the goddess Hecate. To fill the gap between those two episodes, Hauptmann then quickly composed two one-act plays based loosely on Aeschylus: *Agamemnon’s Tod* (1943) and *Elektra* (1944). The result is an ambivalent work because the conciliatory Delphi drama now seems to be almost a travesty when set against the chaotic madness of the fascist era and its terrors. But the tetralogy as a whole reflects Hauptmann’s Wagnerian effort to emulate Aeschylus.

Other writers of the immediate postwar era turned to the same mythic material, which became “the crystallization point for themes of the times: the relapse into barbarism, experience of war, exile, return, the changed relationship of the sexes as well as the conflict of generations.”<sup>53</sup> An exception to the widespread restriction of interest to Iphigenia was the Austrian playwright Rudolf Bayr (1919–1990) who wrote his *Agamemnon* (1948), freely after Aeschylus, as a prelude to Hugo von Hofmannsthal’s earlier *Elektra* (1904), which, familiar from Richard Strauss’ operatic version, was based not on Aeschylus but on Sophocles.<sup>54</sup> He reduced the Aeschylean original by roughly half, drastically shortening the choral odes and tightening the dialogue. Bayr, who believed

51 Hauptmann 1962, 7: 99–100.

52 Ziolkowski 2008, 39–51.

53 Schaller 2001, 194. Schaller is referring particularly to the Iphigenia theme.

54 Ziolkowski 2008, 51–2. Bayr considered the *Libation Bearers* and *Eumenides* “unperformable” on the modern stage. Perhaps a reaction to Nazi appropriation of the *Oresteia* in 1936—see Fischer-Lichte 2008.



that the most meaningful discussions about Greek antiquity were taking place not in scholarly disquisitions but “in existential relationship and aesthetic experiment,” was interested primarily in the issue of moral responsibility.<sup>55</sup> He treats the material in such a way that justifications can be found for all the actions: for Agamemnon’s sacrifice of his daughter, the direction of the prophet; for Clytemnestra’s revenge, the curse resting on the house of Atreus; and so forth. The reader does not know whether Bayr is thinking about Versailles as a justification for Hitler or about the continuing presence of Nazi thinking in postwar Austria.

In general, however, the trilogy has represented, as in the decade prior to World War I, more of a challenge for directors than for writers. A radical modernization of the myth for its contemporary meaning was evident in Erwin Piscator’s 1962 staging of the *Oresteia* in Berlin, where the horrors of Aeschylus were exemplified by the recorded sounds of bombing and visual projections of wartime destruction in Dresden. The last decades of the twentieth century were dominated by the handsome production of Peter Stein (1981), which, following its premiere in Berlin, later enjoyed much-acclaimed guest performances in many European cities. Using selections from various translations and rehearsing for a year and a half, Stein produced a nine-hour version of the trilogy (including two intermissions) concluding with a successful version of the *Eumenides*, where most earlier directors had failed, and resisting all banal attempts at modernization.<sup>56</sup>

The adaptation of classical drama for political purposes is most conspicuously evident in modern treatments of *Persians*,<sup>57</sup> as noted already in connection with Bodmer’s *Karl von Burgund*. Lion Feuchtwanger (1884–1958), later best known for such historical novels as *Jud Süß* (1925), won with his metrical adaptation (1914) of *Die Perser* his first broader success. His condemnation of the German war policy through its implicit identification with Xerxes’ imperialism constituted the first of his several literary reactions to World War I. During World War II, in contrast, the same play was performed on German stages as a celebration of Germany’s anticipated defeat of a barbarian superpower (the Russians? the United States?). In the postwar era, Mattias Braun (b. 1933), who adapted several classical dramas including Euripides’ *Trojan Women* and *Medea* (1958), produced a widely staged version of *Die Perser* (premiere 1961), which was subsequently broadcast as a TV film. Again, the political implications are clear: Xerxes is Hitler, but the chorus consists of members of

55 Bayr 1948, 40.

56 Flashar 2009, 253–9.

57 Flashar 2009, 315–22 and *passim*; and Dreyer 2007.

the people's army who suggest reassuringly that the German people will survive the defeat of the Nazis. In 1991 an adaptation by the prominent dramatist Heiner Müller (1929–1995) was performed at the Berlin Freie Volksbühne with a soundtrack involving traffic noise, machine roars, and other jarring effects. Two years later in Munich, Mattias Braun's version was performed in such a manner as to make the audience identify with the Persians led into destruction by the arrogance of power.

Later stagings in various cities shifted the emphasis from World War II to the wars in the Middle East and cast the Americans in the role of the imperializing Persians. Indeed, the frequently performed drama was read and presented so routinely as a pacifist statement that Durs Grünbein (b. 1962)—a knowledgeable poet who has translated various Greek and Latin works and often uses classical motifs in his own poetry—in his “reproduction” felt it necessary to append an afterword in which he specifically argued that “*The Persians* is in no way the anti-war piece as which a popular manner of reading, startled by the catastrophe of the Second World War, liked to interpret it.”<sup>58</sup> It is, rather, “a single sustained scream” and “a work against the arrogance of excessive armament and the blindness of warmongering.” Since 2000 the play has been frequently performed in Germany, most often in Grünbein's translation and even in two operatic versions. The Austrian composer Klaus Lang composed a score featuring a coloratura soprano as Xerxes and inserting several fortissimo passages to suggest the violence of war. The American Frederic Rzewski mixed jazz with Oriental and romantic sounds as a background to a setting involving politically explicit images, language, and sounds.<sup>59</sup>

The Prometheus theme became so prevalent among writers and thinkers of the German Democratic Republic that one can even speak of its proletarianization<sup>60</sup>—a reading that is indebted directly to the cited passage in Marx's *Das Kapital* but often with echoes of Goethe's titanic hero and no direct association with Aeschylus. This tendency appears already in the poem “Prometheus in der Fabrik” by the early Marxist writer Wilhelm Tkaczuk (1907–1982) about a factory worker enslaved within the walls of his factory, who hurls his revolutionary curses at Zeus. We know from Bertolt Brecht's (1898–1956) working notes that in October 1945 he planned, but never wrote, a “Prometheus,” in which the Titan, having discovered fire, hands it over to the gods, who then create a great nuclear cataclysm to destroy humanity—the

58 Grünbein 2001, 63.

59 Flashar 2009, 315–22.

60 Ziolkowski 2008, 99–126; Riedel 2002, 11–22.

poet's response to the recent bombing of Hiroshima.<sup>61</sup> In Heinz Czechowski's (1935–2009) poem "Prometheus" (1963), the Titan is fettered not to a cliff but to a steaming cauldron in a factory, where he defends himself against the eagle with a stirring rod, while his labors finance the palatial banks and Mercedes of the capitalists.

A few East German writers returned directly to Aeschylus. Heiner Müller used an interlinear edition/translation for his 1968 stage adaptation, making subtle alterations in the language to express the Titan's revolutionary optimism in the context of an early communist society. But in a later version of "The Liberation of Prometheus" he suggests that Prometheus is too inextricably tied to the bourgeois ideology to serve as a satisfactory Marxist icon, for which he now proposes Herakles. The novelist Franz Fühmann (1922–1984) also returned to the ancient sources for the fictional version of the myth that he wrote for young readers: *Prometheus. Die Titanenschlacht* (1974). But rather than limiting himself to Aeschylus, Fühmann used Hesiod and Plato, as well as more recent treatments by Goethe, Shelley, Gide, and Kafka, to elaborate a more complex understanding of the myth, which he traced back to its Jungian archetype. The *Pandora* of the dramatist Peter Hacks (1928–2003), which features Prometheus, is a radical adaptation not of Aeschylus but of a play by Goethe.

Despite all this activity in East Germany, Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* had little success on stage in West Germany. The conscientious and highly acclaimed translation by the noted Austrian novelist and playwright Peter Handke (b. 1942), written originally for the Salzburg Summer Festival of 1986, succeeds in capturing the vividness of the original in thoroughly contemporary speech patterns, but enjoyed only a few subsequent productions.

*Seven against Thebes* fared slightly better. In a 1970 staging in Cologne, Aeschylus' drama, in a translation by the distinguished classicist Wolfgang Schadewaldt, was performed along with Sophocles' *Antigone* in a manner carefully calculated to bring out what amounted to a conflict between matriarchy and patriarchy consistent with Bachofen's theory.<sup>62</sup> The same pairing was performed in 1993 at the Salzburg Festival (in a translation by Dietrich Ebener) as a civil war reflecting the conflict in the Balkans between Serbs and Croats.<sup>63</sup> Durs Grünbein, in his translation (2003), expressly added a "Postlude outside the City" to provide a transition to the following *Antigone*.<sup>64</sup>

61 Brecht 1973, 2: 758.

62 Melchinger 1974, 472.

63 Flashar 2009, 322.

64 Grünbein 2003, 55–66.

## Conclusions

We see, in conclusion, how Wagner's fixation on the trilogy emerges again in Hauptmann's *Atridentetralogie* and in the varied efforts of German directors from 1900 to the present to stage the entire cycle; how Marx's reading of *Prometheus Bound* coupled with Goethe's heroization led to the iconization of the figure in the German Democratic Republic; how a political interpretation of the *Persians* determined views and performances of that drama from Bodmer by way of Droysen to the present; how Bachofen's theory of matriarchy was evident at least occasionally in stagings of *Seven against Thebes*; and how Nietzsche's Dionysian glorification of Aeschylus enhanced his standing generally. Aeschylus may have made his appearance later than Homer, Pindar, Sophocles, and Euripides in what E. M. Butler called "the tyranny of Greece over Germany," but his presence was registered in increasingly significant stages from writers of the Storm and Stress through Weimar classicism and Romanticism down to the imposing group of mid-nineteenth century thinkers. Their presence then colored in various hues the frequent translations, adaptations, and performances of his works in Germany of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

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# Inglorious Barbarians: Court Intrigue and Military Disaster Strike Xerxes, “The Sick Man of Europe”

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## Introduction

Stephanos (or Epiphantos) Demetriades (1760–1827), a teacher from the Greek island of Skiathos, wrote a little known, quasi-tragic verse adaptation of Aeschylus’ *Persians*, which dates back to approximately 1805 and was composed in a semi-vernacular register of the Greek language. Editor Georgios Valetas entitled the play *Persians* or *Xerxes* and named Aeschylus as a source of inspiration. However, the modern Greek play draws from Herodotus and Plutarch as well and has a melodramatic bent to it: its subplots read like contemporary Ottoman court intrigues and introduce new female characters and love interests. This chapter shows how Demetriades liberally added to Aeschylus’ original and argues its case referring to several passages in the modern Greek idiom as well as in English translation. Demetriades’ tragedy *Persians* or *Xerxes* resembles the heroic-moralizing melodrama of the earlier Italian tradition (Metastasio). Its Orientalist notes underscore Greek self-congratulation and victory celebration at a time when the Ottoman Empire or the perceived “sick man of Europe” was on the decline. A brief study of Demetriades’ play may, therefore, make a valuable contribution to classical reception studies with focus on Aeschylus’ history and on its creative blending with other receptive traditions. It also shows how the iconic meaning of the Persian Wars eclipsed the actual facts and sources. Finally, it adds to our knowledge of Greek theater history of the early nineteenth century, drawing attention to neglected texts from a forgotten periphery. Demetriades’ *Persians* renders intelligible the historical narrative of the emerging Greek nation.

When Georgios Valetas published *The Beginnings of Modern Greek Theater* (in Greek) more than six decades ago, he incorporated several long sections of the play and paraphrased the remaining sections of Demetriades’ work, whose manuscript was preserved without a title.<sup>1</sup> Demetriades proved to be

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1 Valetas 1953, 38. Up until Valetas’ partial edition of Demetriades’ manuscript in 1953, the tragedy remained unpublished and lingered in the archives of the playwright and his

a worthy contributor to the pre-revolutionary Greek intellectual renaissance<sup>2</sup> and, later in life, took part in the 1821 Greek War of Independence.<sup>3</sup> Valetas was convinced that Demetriades must have crossed paths on multiple occasions with Regas Velestinles or Regas Pheraios (1757–1798), a precursor-champion of the revolutionary struggle and an advocate of radical-liberal nationalism.<sup>4</sup> According to Valetas, this contact with Regas placed Demetriades “on the path to literature and theater” and to revolutionary theater, in particular.<sup>5</sup> Despite the shortcomings of Valetas’ 1953 work,<sup>6</sup> it has not yet been replaced as the only published edition of Demetriades’ tragedy. Valetas suggested that *Persians* or *Xerxes* might have been staged in Constantinople in 1818, after an earlier premiere in Bucharest,<sup>7</sup> but his sources on the former cannot be verified.<sup>8</sup>

A teacher from Skiathos (in the Sporades), Demetriades had gained access to the Greek aristocracy in Constantinople and worked in secretarial positions to the Phanariot power-holders in Bucharest and to high-placed clerics in the Orthodox Church hierarchy.<sup>9</sup> He mastered various, more or less conservative

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descendants. However, the information about the source manuscript provided by Valetas is minimal. This chapter offers a few representative extracts, which would otherwise be difficult for readers to access, in my own English translation. The editor’s earlier thinking about (Stephanos or Epiphantos) Demetriades is reflected in Valetas 1947, 1: 384–6, 399–400. Stamatopoulou-Vasilakou confirms that it was Valetas who gave the play its title (1994, 1: 112 n. 22).

- 2 Valetas 1953, 28. Athene further reflects on the double name of Demetriades and on his professional and literary activities (1995, 25–7). She centers on Demetriades’ skill in translating and adapting French prose literature (some in the philosophical and Orientalist vein) in her extensive study of modern Greek prose writing of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century (2010, 72–3, 98–101, 361, 423–4). See further Phrankoulas 1953 and Siatopoulos 1984.
- 3 Panagiotounes 1993, 22.
- 4 Valetas 1953, 16, 19, 20, 23, 33.
- 5 Valetas 1953, 20, 22–3, 24–5; also Athene 2010, 100–1, 361. Regas’ imprisonment led to his death at the hands of the Turks but his name lived on as a symbol of integrity and of the struggle for liberation. See further Woodhouse 1995.
- 6 Puchner criticizes Valetas’ edition mainly because it is a partial edition (2004, 265–6 n. 127).
- 7 Valetas 1953, 35 and 1. Valetas used the Greek alphabet to number the pages of the first half of his book but returned to regular Arabic numerals in the second half, which contains the actual text edition. This explains why I list a higher number before a lower number.
- 8 The theater historian Giannes Sideres doubted whether *Persians* or *Xerxes* was ever performed before the onset of the War of Independence (1976, 21).
- 9 Up until the outbreak of the War of Independence, the Greek Phanariot families (or the Phanariots, named after the Phanari, the Greek district of Constantinople) created lineages



registers of the Greek language in addition to French.<sup>10</sup> With a few lines in French, Demetriades dedicated his play to Alexandros Mourouzes, his progressive protector and benefactor.<sup>11</sup> As part of their economy of gifts and favors, the Ottomans had bestowed on Mourouzes several terms as *hospodar*, or the position of the sultan's viceroy, of either Moldavia or Wallachia.<sup>12</sup> Further, Mourouzes had two sons who held prominent positions in the Ottoman administration; they were present at a clandestine reading of Aeschylus' *Persians* held in a Constantinopolitan mansion in 1820.<sup>13</sup> The history of modern Greek literature by Börje Knös briefly notes a tragedy entitled *The Persians* without attributing it to Demetriades and without acknowledging Valetas' edition:

*Nous connaissons une tragédie Les Perses, encore en manuscript, qui, inspirée d'Eschyle et composée en vers dans une langue mi-populaire, était dédiée à Alexandros Mourouzis, prince de Moldavie, et on suppose, qu'elle a été jouée à Jassy à la Cour de ce prince.*<sup>14</sup>

We know of a tragedy, *The Persians*, still in manuscript form, which, inspired by Aeschylus and composed in verse in a semi-vernacular language, was dedicated to Alexandros Mourouzes, prince of Moldavia. It was supposedly performed in Jassy, at the prince's Court.

Valetas qualified the language of Demetriades as a semi-vernacular language in verse,<sup>15</sup> even though certain elements of the playwright's idiom strike the reader as more modern and as akin to the language of nineteenth-century satire and comedy (the badly strained rhyming patterns contribute to this

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of prestigious and lucrative appointments through their close affiliations with the Ottoman court in Constantinople. See further Philliou 2011.

10 Athene 1995, 27, 37, nos. 16, 17, 21. Lambros offers an edition of Demetriades' autobiography in verse as well as the playwright's "History of Skiathos Island" in prose (1916, 425–30 and 430–6, respectively).

11 The dedication starts out in French but switches to Greek spelled in Roman characters (Valetas 1953, 15). More importantly, however, the name Mourouzes is Valetas' own conjecture for a lacuna in the text of the dedication. Valetas' conjecture is based on historical information about the Western-minded Mourouzes' cultural interests and initiatives (to which the editor pays ample attention throughout his book). The identification is, however, not based on the textual attestation of Mourouzes' last name.

12 Marinescu 1987, 43–62.

13 Van Steen 2010, chapter 2 and *passim*.

14 Knös 1962, 656.

15 Valetas 1953, 1, 2.

impression as, for instance, in the forced nine-line rhyme of the passage quoted below, p. 262). Knös followed the all too brief characterization of the play's language and also other leads of the editor. The incomplete information given by Knös, however, took on an academic life of its own.<sup>16</sup>

The tenure of Alexandros Mourouzes (1746?–1816) at the court of Jassy, the capital of the Danubian principality of Moldavia, lasted from 1792 until 1807, with interruptions. This tenure covered the 1805 date of Demetriades' tragedy conjectured by Valetas, who pegged the date to the dedication to the "Maecenas" Mourouzes, but his arguments are not entirely convincing.<sup>17</sup> Alexis Polites, too, casts doubt on Valetas' reasons for positing the 1805 date.<sup>18</sup> He argues that, because Demetriades' play resonates with overtones of Metastasio, it belongs, rather, in the 1810s, when Metastasio's *Themistocles* was all the rage among the Greeks of Odessa.<sup>19</sup> The city of Odessa, founded by Catherine the Great, is located on the north shore of the Black Sea; it was the thriving center of a Greek community, which belonged to Russia and was not subject to Ottoman rule. Pietro Metastasio (1698–1782) was a beloved Western "court poet," who, with a keen sense for theater, mapped melodramatic storylines onto historical events.<sup>20</sup> He belabored the taste that seventeenth and

16 By 2007, we encounter the dubious record of an early nineteenth-century French adaptation of Aeschylus' *Persians*, which is no longer sponsored but actually written by Alexandros Mourouzes: Puchner's "the *Persians* in an adaptation of A. Mourouzes" (1992, 295, with footnote reference to Knös); also Puchner's "an adaptation of Aeschylus' *Persians* by the ruler, A. Mourouzes" (1993, 68 n. 208); also Stamatopoulou-Vasilakou's mention of "a likely performance around 1805 of the *Persians* in an adaptation of A. Mourouzes" (2006, 40, with footnote reference to Köns (sic!) and to Puchner 1992, 295). Hall and Macintosh remark: "A French *Les Perses*, inspired by Aeschylus, was in the early nineteenth century dedicated to Alexandros Morouzis, Phanariot Prince of the Danubian principality of Moldavia, and may have been produced at his court in Jassy" (2005, 265, with footnote reference to Knös); and, finally, Hall's identical statement with the same footnote reference to Knös 2007, 180. Again, Knös remarked on the "semi-vernacular" language of the verse adaptation, but he meant an adaptation in Greek. Because Knös wrote in French, however, the adaptation has, by 2007, been established as a French one—and in the very volume that current and future scholars are, for all the right reasons, likely to consult first.

17 Valetas 1953, 14–6, 21, 37. See also above, n. 11. Zoras, however, lists examples of other works dedicated by Demetriades to Alexandros Mourouzes (1975, 6–7). Lambros 1916, 424.

18 Polites 2010, 397 n. 28.

19 Polites 2010, 397 n. 28; see also below.

20 Feldman 2007, 230–3 offers a brief biographical account of Metastasio and devotes attention also to the impact of ancient myth and history on the librettist's work (in particular, Plutarch's biographies of exemplary historical prototypes). Tabaki discusses Metastasio's

eighteenth-century Western-European opera cultivated, with its penchant for celebratory or at least morally uplifting endings. Such operas responded to—and flattered—the interests of contemporary court culture with its emphasis on dynastic foundation, nobility of birth and character, and on a finale of harmony.<sup>21</sup>

Valetas further claimed that Demetriades wrote his play of “patriotic symbolism” independently of the *Achilles* (1805) of Athanasios Christopoulos, one of the earliest Greek neoclassical tragedies to gain popularity, but that, together, the two works stand at the beginning of a new heroic era for Greek theater.<sup>22</sup> For Sideres, Demetriades’ play stayed in the shadow of the *Achilles* of Christopoulos, who was later dubbed “the new Anacreon” for his lyric poems in praise of wine and love.<sup>23</sup> Christopoulos, too, was a close connection and favorite of Alexandros Mourouzes at his court in Jassy. He acted as a tutor to Konstantinos Mourouzes, one of Alexandros’ sons who attended the 1820 reading of Aeschylus’ *Persians*.<sup>24</sup> The *Achilles* of Christopoulos solidified the tight links among epic poetry, tragic performance, and the (mythical or mythified) “biographical” or heroic lens. It upheld the Trojan War as an archetype of the Greeks’ victorious military campaigns against their Eastern enemies, anticipating a Greek victory over the Turks, and became a staple of both pre- and post-independence repertoires, which included rudimentary school productions.<sup>25</sup>

Demetriades wrote a total of three plays, which attest to his interest in ancient Greek myth and history: *The Comedy of Epimetheus and Pandora*, *The Dialogue of Olympias and Diogenes*, and *Xerxes*. Sideres dismissed *Persians* or

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popularity, which contributed to the revival of Greek theater (2007, 286, 288, 290–1), and reiterates that his heroic dramas were to be found in Greek intellectual circles “precisely at the point where reading and stage performance meet” (2007, 290).

21 Kimbell refers to Metastasio as “that great arbiter of eighteenth-century taste,” in a study of some of the formative seventeenth and eighteenth-century operatic adaptations of the Persian Wars (2007, 201). On Metastasio’s phenomenal and worldwide success, see Feldman 2007, 231–3, 240–1.

22 Valetas 1953, 23 and 1.

23 Sideres 1976, 21. See also Mackridge 2008, 116.

24 Panagiotounes 1993, 21.

25 The title *Achilles* proves to be the work’s most commonly used but post-revolutionary title. Before 1821, the tragedy appeared under various titles, including *The Death of Patroclus*. See further Chatzepantazes 2006, 29–30 and Puchner 1993, 68, 73 n. 236; 2006, 157–62, 168–9. Spathes discusses the cultural role of the courts of the Danubian principalities (1986, 23–4, 47–8, 61–3). Camariano-Cioran 1974 has delivered the standard study on the intellectual and educational life of the trans-Danubian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, over which Alexander Mourouzes ruled intermittently.

*Xerxes* as the intellectual exercise of a playwright imitating Aeschylus and even called it “out of touch with the theatrical reality of Europe.”<sup>26</sup> Nothing could be less true. Again, this chapter argues that, when read against the backdrop of the early nineteenth-century Western-oriented stage culture, the 1805 tragedy is at the very least worthy of reconsideration. With its string of melodramatic subplots and shows of new characters, Demetriades’ *Persians* or *Xerxes* converses with Metastasian opera and seasons its interpretation with Orientalist prejudice.

### Demetriades and Orientalism

A philological and theatrical curiosity, Demetriades’ *Persians* or *Xerxes* of 1805 emerged from the period that Edward Said has identified as formative of modern Orientalism. Said first published his seminal work *Orientalism* in 1978. Ever since, the notion of Orientalism has helped to shape colonial and postcolonial discourse analysis. Said’s wide-ranging work (and its historical importance in literary and cultural studies) has also spawned many revisions, initiated both by Said himself and by others who set themselves the task of refining the basic principles of what became known as the “Orientalist discourse.” The phrase “Orientalist attitude,” too, was coined by Said to define Orientalism as a binary mode of thinking or as an essentializing style of representation that does not realistically describe actual Eastern territories. Demetriades may be regarded as an exponent of this Orientalist attitude, even though he and his preoccupations were grounded in the perceived East as well as in the West. Moreover, Aeschylus’ *Persians* has been at the center of the debate about the validity of Said’s claims pertaining to antiquity. Even though *Orientalism* remains a provocative tool for analysis, we cannot but take issue with Said’s citing of Aeschylus’ *Persians* as the oldest extant example of the Orientalist attitude and with the implication of continuity resulting from this claim.<sup>27</sup>

26 Sideres 1976, 21. Panagiotounes claims that all three of Demetriades’ plays lack in quality and are not theatrically viable (1993, 21–2).

27 Recent studies have done much to nuance Said’s conception of Orientalism and his engagement with Aeschylus’ *Persians*, in particular. Readings of Orientalism have proven to be especially complex when modern Greece, philhellenism, and any hints of the continuity argument are involved. Philhellenism was the more politically minded expression of broader Hellenism, aimed at the liberation of the ethnic Greek territories from the Ottoman Turks. Said based his analysis of Orientalist representation on the landmark event of Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt (1798), and he saw “modern Orientalism” span from the last third of the eighteenth century up to around 1870. The key events

Said did not delve into a profound interrogation of Aeschylus' *Persians*, but he implied that the tragedy dismisses or depreciates Asia. Perhaps his most enduring qualification of the play remains the following:

What matters here is that Asia speaks through and by virtue of the European imagination, which is depicted as victorious over Asia, that hostile "other" world beyond the seas. To Asia are given the feelings of emptiness, loss, and disaster that seem thereafter to reward Oriental

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at the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century marked the beginning of the new era of European colonialism. Orientalist attitudes strengthened as France and also Britain spread into the Orient despite occasional military setbacks. Said compared this modern Orientalism to earlier, pre-modern forms, which is where his references to Aeschylus' *Persians* came in. Zachary Lockman 2004 treats the problems of Orientalist definition and its qualifications as well as its history. Since 1978, many scholars have questioned the contradictions and the non-historical essentialism of Said's version of Orientalism, that is, the one and totalizing contrast of West versus East. Critics such as H. D. Broadhead, in his 1960 commentary on Aeschylus' *Persians*, Erich Gruen 2011, 9–20, Edith Hall 2007, and Rebecca Futo Kennedy 2013, 66, 68, 82–4 nos. 7–9, 24–6, 36, and *passim* have affirmed or reaffirmed their (diverging) positions on Aeschylus' *Persians* as Orientalizing. Orientalist essentialism has indeed been retraced to find its early expression in the very rudimentary, hostile blocks of ancient Greece versus Achaemenid Persia and of the indiscriminate identification of the ancient Persians with the Turks of medieval times through the early nineteenth century. Against this backdrop, the Greek struggle for liberation of (nominally) 1821 was presented as a war of Western civilization against Eastern barbarism. Stathis Gourgouris has led the way in theorizing Orientalism's relation to Greece in his 1996 study, *Dream Nation: Enlightenment, Colonization, and the Institution of Modern Greece*, which covers historical and theoretical intersections of Orientalism and Philhellenism. Van Steen offers an extensive discussion of the contested place of Aeschylus' *Persians* in pre-modern or "empirical" Orientalism (2010, 162–8; part of a broader analysis of Orientalism, philhellenism, and their decisive turn to the *Persians* and the Persian Wars, 111–173). Notably, Edith Hall has seen the roots of an imperialist tradition of demonizing the Eastern neighbors in Aeschylus' *Persians* and other ancient Greek texts, which, she claims, portrayed the Persians negatively in that first, monumentalized clash between West and East. Hall sums up: "Aeschylus' *Persians* has played an indisputable role in the perpetuation of the ideological conflict between East and West that has recently re-erupted with such terrible violence. It has historically helped to reinforce the adoption by the Christian mind-set of a primary Other in the shape of Islam. The third-millennial vilification of the Arab world has a long history which cannot be dissociated from the rediscovery of *ancient* Greek xenophobia and prejudices against non-Greeks in the East" (2007, 185).

challenges to the West; and also, the lament that in some glorious past Asia fared better, was itself victorious over Europe.<sup>28</sup>

Scholars tend to overlook, however, that Said tied his first mention of the *Persians* and its “dramatic immediacy” to the warning that Aeschylus presented his public with “a highly artificial enactment of what a non-Oriental has made into a symbol for the whole Orient.”<sup>29</sup> Also, we cannot lose sight of the distinction between what Aeschylus might have intended and what the receptive tradition has made of his tragedy. Demetriades’ tragedy, too, was a stage portrayal or dramatized representation of the Persian aggressor. The realization of the meaning of Aeschylus’ *Persians* in antiquity did *not* overlap with the process of making Western Orientalism, but a tremendous historical irony remains—and one that is a byproduct of reception meeting (melo)dramatization: during the heyday of modern Orientalism, Aeschylus’ alleged Orientalism was reinscribed in Demetriades’ loose adaptation of the very tragedy that Said subsequently located at the root of the problematic attitude. In 1805, Demetriades (re)performed the East and Orientalized the Persian Other in the figure of his idiosyncratic Xerxes. His histrionic play enacted overt Orientalism, to produce and sustain certain ideas about the cultural Other.

### Composition and Sources of *Persians* or *Xerxes*

Valetas claimed that Demetriades’ manuscript of the tragedy *Persians* or *Xerxes* was not a translation or a copy but an original: he saw proof in the many deletions, changes, and additions of words, lines, and characters, as well as in the author’s hasty and careless handwriting. Also, Demetriades wrote the bulk of the tragedy in fifteen-syllable political verse and composed a total of about sixty scenes, but he did not make a clear division into acts. Given these many successive but short scenes in which the play unfolds, Valetas concluded that the author left his work unfinished and presented the reader with his own division in five acts.<sup>30</sup> Valetas named Aeschylus as Demetriades’ source of inspiration, given that he turned to the oldest tragedian in other works as well.<sup>31</sup> The editor pointed to the modern play’s conception and its presentation of events from the perspective of the Persians, the appearance of Darius’ ghost in

28 Said 1979, 56.

29 Said 1979, 21.

30 Valetas 1953, 2 of the text edition.

31 Valetas 1953, 38.

the monologue of Xerxes, the latter's humiliation, and the unexpected Greek victory over the Eastern enemy. Valetas saw other parallels between the passage in which Aeschylus' Queen Atossa inquires about the Greeks, and finds out about their culture and courage, and the questions posed by Demetriades' Xerxes that lead to a similar indirect praise of the Greeks.<sup>32</sup>

In my own estimation, Demetriades' tragedy is an interesting and at times humorous amalgam of Aeschylean theatricality and dialogue, heroic vignettes from Herodotus' *Histories*, edifying messages that conjure up Plutarch's biographies, and emotional scenes inspired by Metastasio's libretti. Stese Athene has characterized Demetriades' translation and adaptation style in general as an "eclectic translation strategy," and the playwright's *Persians* or *Xerxes* is a case in point.<sup>33</sup> Valetas briefly acknowledged the influence of "contemporary Italian and French theater plays" but did not enter into details,<sup>34</sup> as if acknowledging Western influences would detract from the resonance of Aeschylus' oldest play. Regas Velestinles had cultivated an interest in Metastasio in the final years of the eighteenth century, and he had created somewhat of a following.<sup>35</sup> In 1779, a two-volume edition of modern Greek translations in prose of six of Metastasio's most popular libretti was published in Venice (republished 1806) and comprised: *Artaxerxes*, *Hadrian in Syria*, *Demetrius*, *The Mercy of Titus*, *Siroes*, and *Cato in Utica*. These poetic texts, now transformed into prose plays, share a moral-didactic and political dimension, which places this act of reception firmly in the context of the "ethical-didactic Enlightenment."<sup>36</sup> Georgios Zaviras, a contemporary of Demetriades, mentioned that Georgios N. Soutsos was the translator who made these six Italian libretti accessible in Greek;<sup>37</sup>

32 Valetas 1953, 38.

33 Athene 2010, 361.

34 Valetas 1953, 38.

35 Puchner 2014, 156–7, 159–60, 164.

36 Puchner 2014, 156.

37 Zaviras 1972, 241. Puchner contextualizes modern Greek translators' interest in Metastasio and discusses, more specifically, the verse translations of Ioannes Karatzas, who wrote in a remarkably fluent Demotic language as early as the 1800s. He identifies Karatzas as likely one of the students of Demetriades (2014, 149). Before 1800, Polyzoos Lambanitziotis from Ioannina published Greek adaptations of Metastasio's libretti of *Achilles on Skyros* and *Demophon* in Vienna in 1794 (Puchner 2014, 153, 154–5, 158, 163–4, 165). As early as the mid-eighteenth century, translators from the Ionian islands developed an interest in Metastasio's libretti, especially in his popular *Artaxerxes* (Puchner 2014, 155–6). The Greek translation of *Artaxerxes* made by Ioannes Kantounes from Zakynthos was published by Theodoses Pylarinos, who notes the tragic bent of the play (2010, 377–8). Puchner counts

others, however, attribute the authorship to Thomas of Rhodes.<sup>38</sup> Valetas saw Metastasio's operas about Persian kings and courts, that is, *Artaxerxes* (Rome, 1730) and *Siroes* (Venice, 1726), as the most logical sources of inspiration after Aeschylus, but again he did not elaborate.<sup>39</sup> Demetriades' play, however, features far more characters than either Metastasio's *Artaxerxes* or *Siroes*: among the more than twenty-five characters are Xerxes, his spouse, his mistress, Leonidas of Sparta, the traitor Ephialtes, Themistocles, Aristides, and even the personified Persia. Several larger groups figure in the play as well, and they include the King's counselors, his royal servants, the Persian army troops, Xerxes' Immortals, a group of Athenian citizens and Athenian women, and a chorus of Greek allies. Demetriades' play does not have the formal chorus of Aeschylus' original but its opening has the tragedian's elders appear as individual counselors.

Metastasio's *Artaxerxes* was a hugely popular libretto, which received multiple translations and musical settings across the Western world.<sup>40</sup> Demetriades' Xerxes shares with this work the infatuation with a mistress. But while Metastasio has his hero supersede this private desire, the life of Demetriades' antihero remains ruled by passion. Xerxes' erotic and other passions are painted with bold Orientalist strokes, to the detriment of all of the Greeks' Eastern enemies. The Xerxes of Demetriades may be an all-powerful monarch but, like the monarch of Aeschylus (*Pers.* 750–1, cf. 767), he is enslaved by emotions and shows little nobility in his thinking or conduct.<sup>41</sup> This Xerxes serves as an antipode to the free Greek citizens who defend their invaded fatherland and who thus become historical prototypes for the modern Greek revolutionaries

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a total number of 24 modern Greek translations of Metastasio that were printed in the eighteenth century, but only 11 have been preserved (2014, 156).

38 See further Puchner 2014, 156, who notes that both authors belonged to the Phanariot circles.

39 Valetas 1953, 38. In his anthology of 1947–1949, Valetas traced another modern Greek adaptation to the 1779 Greek translation of Metastasio's *Artaxerxes* as well (1947, 1: 386). On the *Life of Artaxerxes* authored by Plutarch probably later in life, see Almagor 2014. This *Life of Artaxerxes* contains episodes of apparently inherent cruelty (Plu. *Art.* 12–19), which Almagor traces back to Ctesias, historian and physician of Artaxerxes II. The final chapters focus on the corrupting moral and political weaknesses of Artaxerxes, including the king's "vices in succumbing to his carnal pleasures, the incestuous relations [Plu. *Art.* 23, 27] he has with his daughter ..., his rage, and his brutal honor-seeking [Plu. *Art.* 25]." Almagor 2014, 283.

40 Feldman 2007, 232, 248.

41 Kennedy 2013, 79. Kantzios discusses the emotions of loss and fear in Aeschylus' *Persians* and notes Xerxes' failure to stand accountable (2004, 11). See also Griffith 1999, 62.



preparing to rise up against the Ottoman Turks. Nobility is the prerogative of the Greeks whom the Persians have tried to enslave. The King's amazement at the Spartans conveys to the reader (or viewer) that these Greeks, in particular, have become his model—a model that he can never emulate. The process of working through romantic trials and tribulations proves to be a test of the monarch's authority, and this holds true for Metastasio's Artaxerxes as well as for the Xerxes of Demetriades. The outcome, however, could not be more different: the process affirms the authority of the former,<sup>42</sup> but undermines that of the latter.

Valetas underestimated Plutarch's formative influence as an ancient source for Metastasio himself and for pre-revolutionary Greek theater. Metastasio's opera *Themistocles* (*Temistocle*, Vienna, 1736) draws on Plutarch's *Life of Themistocles* and saw no less than four early translations into modern Greek.<sup>43</sup> The opera (or, more likely, the libretto adapted to serve as an autonomous play) was performed to great acclaim in Odessa in 1814, at the time that the Greek revolutionary Society of Friends was founded, and again in subsequent years.<sup>44</sup> The patriotic Greek community of Odessa received the *Themistocles* with nationalist euphoria. The opera's popularity kindled a contagious kind of attention, which inspired other Greek dramatic versions of and an entire pre-revolutionary receptive tradition for the Persian Wars.<sup>45</sup> Favorite Persian War heroes became more prominent and affected theater practice also in other Greek communities from about 1815 onward. The dramatic scope of older and new plays ranged from courageous Greek self-assertion in the face of the Eastern despot to patriotism that sanctioned tyrannicide.<sup>46</sup> Did Demetriades' tragedy predate or tap into this renewed interest in Persian War topics? The initial setting of Demetriades' play at the Persian court, where intrigue reigns, is reminiscent of the so-called Themistocles Romance, which, inspired by Plutarch's *Life of Themistocles* 26–29, was again made popular by Metastasio. Like Plutarch's biography, Metastasio's *Themistocles* extends beyond the hero's glory days as the mastermind of Salamis to the exotic but checkered parts of

42 Feldman 2007, 250.

43 For an insightful discussion of Metastasio's *Themistocles*, see Feldman 2007, 234–42. Puchner notes that one of the modern Greek translations/stage adaptations of the *Themistocles* originated in the Phanariot milieu of 1785 and a printed edition of the play became available in 1796 (2014, 157, 158, 161, 163). Blessios discusses the most important Themistocles plays of nineteenth through early twentieth-century Greece (2011, 86–90).

44 Spathes 1986, 51, 107; also, Chatzepantazes 2006, 24–5, 26, 30, 32–3 and Puchner 2014, 153, 158–9, 160.

45 Van Steen 2010, 126.

46 Van Steen 2010, 129.

his Persian career.<sup>47</sup> It is the kind of treatment that Demetriades has reserved for Demaratus, the Spartan king who had sought refuge at the Persian court (see further below). His own Themistocles is still struggling for Greek salvation at Salamis.

### An Analysis of *Persians* or *Xerxes*

#### *Act One (3–6, Manuscript Folios 2a–9b): Xerxes in Persia: “The Sick Man” of the East*<sup>48</sup>

The Great Powers (Britain, France, and Russia) called the declining Ottoman Empire the sick man of Europe, convinced that the once great empire was growing weaker and more dissolute. This Orientalist label also “justified” their

47 The Themistocles Romance can be regarded as a smaller variant of the West-East encounters reflected in the much more popular Alexander Romance. Marr refers to Plutarch's *Themistocles* 26–9 as the four chapters that form “a unified, largely self-contained, narrative, telling the dramatic story of the salvation of Themistocles, an exile and a hunted man in Asia, thanks to the unexpected goodwill of the Persian King” (1998, 147). See also Strohm 1998, 552–3, 558, 559, who stresses the importance of classical biographic literature for Western Baroque theater. The French translation of Plutarch's *Lives* by André Dacier saw multiple editions throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and it became the catalyst to the widespread popularity of the *Lives* among mainly French and Italian literati and artists. Before Dacier's rendering, the French translation by Jacques Amyot of 1559 had inspired most of Shakespeare's Roman plays, albeit in an indirect manner (via the 1579 English translation of Amyot made by Sir Thomas North). Grell notes Plutarch's growing role in the curriculum of the French Enlightenment (1995, 1: 103). Pelling 2007 credits Plutarch with shaping the reception history of the Persian Wars. For more on Plutarch's reception in the modern West, see Goldhill 2002, 246–93; Lamberton 2001, 188–95, and, most recently, the nearly 100-page-long section in the collective volume edited by Beck. Lamberton captures Plutarch's potential as a source of inspiration for Baroque and Shakespearean theater when he states: “Plutarch is pervasively rhetorical, and to be rhetorical is to be theatrical” (2001, 192). Plutarch also influenced Boccaccio's *On the Fates of Illustrious Men*, which includes a “biography” of Xerxes. This fourteenth-century collection was long the better known of Boccaccio's works and helped to condition the way in which Renaissance Italy approached the Ottoman Empire. See Rosenbloom 2006, 156–7. Plutarch's influence on Western European adaptations and subsequent modern Greek historical and patriotic drama remains unacknowledged, however, in important recent studies such as Chatzepantazes 2006, especially 22–3, 24; cf. Van Steen 2010, *passim*.

48 Henceforth the numbers in parenthesis refer to the page numbers of Valetas' edition of Demetriades' play.

ambitions to carve up vast territories in the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>49</sup> Demetriades himself does not attach this derogatory label to his Xerxes, but his tragedy is no less pervaded by the Orientalist bias that originated the phrase and perpetuated its use. The 1805 play positions itself as a historical drama. More prominent a theme than Xerxes' defeat is his moral decline. Xerxes becomes the peg on which the playwright has hung exotic plot twists, favorite romantic tales, and East-West encounters based on Herodotus. The play's opening is set in Xerxes' royal palace, where the King finds himself haunted by Darius' call to take revenge on the Greeks for his own defeat at Marathon in 490 BCE. Xerxes hears his father's urgings in the direct speech of his imagination, because, as in Aeschylus' tragedy, father and son do not meet eye to eye:<sup>50</sup>

Ξέρξη, τί ἀργεῖς νᾶ πᾶς νᾶ ἐκδικήσης  
τοὺς ἀλαζόνας Ἑλλήνας καὶ νᾶ τοὺς ἀφάνισης; (3)

Xerxes, what keeps you from going out to take revenge on the arrogant Greeks and from wiping them out?

Darius conveniently speaks Greek, as in Aeschylus' *Persians*. Demetriades follows the original tragedy's convention of eliminating the language barrier (albeit the triple language barrier of Persian versus Ancient and Modern Greek).<sup>51</sup> Xerxes seeks the advice of his closest counselors, who tell him what he likes to hear—again in Greek. Mardonius entices the King with the vision of a prostrated Greece. The counselors' attitude of servility and pretense before the mighty despot sets the opening tone of the play's pervasive Orientalism. Amid the intrigues prevailing at the Persian court, Artabazus (Artabanus), Xerxes' uncle, voices a different opinion and, pointing out the Greeks' strengths, discourages his inexperienced nephew from waging war. The scene is modeled on Herodotus 7.8–10. This dialogic ploy intended to highlight Greek qualities reoccurs in an exchange between Xerxes and Demaratus (7, based on Herodotus 7.101–4). Aeschylus' *Persians* gives this role to the chorus-leader responding to the inquiries of Queen Atossa about Athens (*Pers.* 230–45). He also has a Persian messenger report to the Persian court on the Greek battle cry (*Pers.* 402–5):

49 Van Steen 2010, 23–4.

50 The latter point is central to Mark Griffith's interpretation of the play (1999, 44–65).

51 On the possibility that Aeschylus used specific rhythms, word order, and word repetitions to mark the Persians' speech within the play as "barbaric," see Constantinidis, this volume.

ὦ παῖδες Ἑλλήνων ἴτε,  
 ἐλευθεροῦτε πατρίδ', ἐλευθεροῦτε δὲ  
 παῖδας, γυναῖκας, θεῶν τε πατρώων ἔδη,  
 θήκας τε προγόνων· νῦν ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀγών.

On, sons of the Greeks, free your fatherland, free your children, your wives, the temples of your fathers' gods, and the tombs of your ancestors. Now the struggle is for all.

This purple passage conveys, in direct speech, the motto that the Greeks chanted while fatally attacking Xerxes' fleet at Salamis. Even though this passage soon became a slogan of freedom and (phil)hellenic fervor, Demetriades pays less attention to it or to the stirring answer of Aeschylus' *Persians* 242, the response to Atossa's question under whose "despotic" rule the Greeks remain: "Of no mortal man are they called the slaves or subordinates" (*Pers.* 241–2: τίς δὲ ποιμάνωρ ἔπεστι κάπιδеспόζει στρατῶ; οὔτινος δοῦλοι κέκληνται φωτὸς οὐδ' ὑπήκοοι).<sup>52</sup>

Demetriades' Xerxes does not heed any warnings. Darius' ghost summons him again. Like the Darius of Herodotus (7.1 and 7.5.1), this Darius is the more warlike of the father-son pair: he keeps goading the reluctant Xerxes and thereby steers his son into destruction. Demetriades paints the King and father in crude strokes, wiping out the memory of the reasonable ghost of the Aeschylean Darius, who, with unshaken equanimity, criticizes his son's foolish rashness. The (ghost of) Darius of Aeschylus shields himself, the Persian dynasty, and Persian culture by attributing full culpability to his son.<sup>53</sup> Xerxes starts preparing a huge war campaign and announces his brazen plan to cut through the Mount Athos peninsula (as per Herodotus 7.22–4, 37, 122).

In the opening scenes of Aeschylus' original tragedy, the chorus of elders interacts not with Xerxes but with Queen Atossa. This chorus/council quickly assumes the role of the play's protagonist, and it relegates Xerxes to a lesser part that plays out in remote places off-stage or under conditions of distress (whether reported or shown on stage at the play's end). Aeschylus' chorus does recall the names, appearances, and strengths of the various contingents that make up the King's huge army, and it alludes briefly to his traversing of the Hellespont (*Pers.* 71; also 722, 745–8). However, this chorus can no longer hope to influence Xerxes, whose defeat a Persian messenger announces beginning in line 255. Demetriades, on the other hand, gives the uncontested protagonist

52 Van Steen 2010, 90–1, 118–25, 143.

53 Rosenbloom 2006, 101; also, Griffith 1999, 54, 60 and Kennedy 2013, 78, 79.

role to his equally inexperienced Xerxes, which may (partly) explain why he then expects to engage his reader with reports, not only on Xerxes' military exploits, but also on his conquests in love.

An abrupt switch to an idyllic scene follows, which deludes the reader into thinking that Demetriades fuses tragedy with romance:<sup>54</sup> Xerxes meets his mistress Arteïs, the wife of his unknowing younger brother, Masistes. In Herodotus 9.108, Xerxes falls in love first with his brother's wife, then with his brother's daughter, Artaynte, whom he makes his own daughter-in-law.<sup>55</sup> Demetriades' King tells Arteïs about the upcoming campaign and deplors the distance it will place between them. This exchange serves the purpose of unmasking Xerxes as the psychologically weaker party. The King's infatuation with his sister-in-law is another act of transgression, this time sexual in nature. But "the sick man of Europe" is not a pervert: he is repulsive, rather, for next abandoning his mistress to the cruel designs of his jealous wife, Parysatis, once she has found out about her husband's infidelities. Like the stock character of the spurned royal (and/or mythic-divine) consort, Parysatis inflicts the worst bodily mutilation on her husband's mistress, whose nose, ears, and limbs she has cut off.<sup>56</sup> Arteïs, in turn, awaits a last chance to bitterly scold Xerxes for his cowardly and unethical behavior before committing suicide in his presence (one wonders how). The plot is as thick as in Herodotus 9.109–12: when Arteïs' husband learns about the fatal mutilation of his wife, he promptly departs for Bactria to instigate a revenge campaign against his brother; Xerxes sends out troops to arrest him (9.113). However, the sharp and final confrontation between Xerxes and Arteïs is absent from Herodotus, as is her suicide before his eyes and his failure to follow her in death. Demetriades does not pass up an opportunity to have a callous Orientalist despot denounced. Thus, the scenes of the modern play's first act reveal a Xerxes who is readily flattered, easily

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54 Rosenbloom cites examples of Xerxes as the "romantic antihero" in the seventeenth-century Western operatic tradition (2006, 157–9). None of these examples, however, seem to have inspired Demetriades' play: they include a *Xerxes* by Francesco Cavalli, staged in Venice in 1654 and reperformed in Paris six years later, and another Italian *Xerxes* of 1694, by Giovanni Bononcini, both of which influenced Handel's *Xerxes* (London, 1738). The year 1699 saw yet another *Xerxes*, written by the English actor and playwright Colley Cibber, in which the King appears as a "cruel hedonist" (Rosenbloom 2006, 158), which is a label that applies to Demetriades' protagonist as well.

55 Llewellyn-Jones further contextualizes the story of Xerxes' relationship with his own niece (2013, 137–9, 198–9).

56 Drew Griffith 2011 sees in this story of revenge and dismemberment echoes of the mythical tales of Hera's vengefulness targeting mistresses of Zeus (in the case of Semele with lethal consequences as well). The biblical story of Esther provides another parallel.

influenced, cowardly, selfish, and unjust to the core. This character portrayal of the protagonist must bespeak the moral decline of the Persian court.

What kind of audiences was the scorned wife's savage punishment of Arteis meant to amuse?! The vivid depiction of violence squarely places cowardliness, cruelty, and injustice in the Eastern domain, as per the Orientalist thinking of the early nineteenth century. Also, Demetriades might have yielded to a Metastasian-style concern that the old stories needed more and more graphic means to stay theatrically viable. Nonetheless, certain representational aspects of the 1805 tragedy point to the future of Greek theater plays, anticipating the heyday of melodramatic comedy and burlesque that typically subordinated women. With its Metastasian makeover, the 1805 play appealed to the Greek (expatriate) elite classes that followed Western fashions, from Italian opera to Orientalism.

*Act Two (6–9, Manuscript Folios 10a-16a): Xerxes Facing the  
300 Spartans at Thermopylae*

The second act of *Persians* or *Xerxes* follows Herodotus closely by situating characters and events against the backdrop of the Persian War campaign. The act is set in Phrygia, amid intense military preparations. With pride, Demetriades' Xerxes musters his troops and makes plans to build a bridge across the Hellespont (Herodotus 7.33–6, 44). Savagery recurs when the King has the oldest son of the satrap Pythius sliced in half, because his father requested that this grown son be allowed to stay behind, to care for him in his old age (Herodotus 7.38–9). Xerxes goes on to subdue Thrace, Macedonia, and Thessaly in quick succession. When the troops and the action come to a temporary halt at Thermopylae, Demetriades conjures up further episodes made famous by Herodotus. Demaratus explains to Xerxes the ominous meaning of the Spartan warriors' custom to take care of their hair before going into a decisive battle. The source is Herodotus 7.208–9, and the act signals the Spartans' determination to fight until the very end and to be beautiful in death. Demetriades also notes Leonidas' famous response of *μολὼν λαβέ* ("come and get [them]") in answer to the Persian delegation demanding that the Spartans give up their weapons. By betraying the 300, Ephialtes saves the day for Xerxes (Herodotus 7.213). Leonidas delivers a speech to his doomed soldiers—an episode ever so briefly told by Herodotus (7.224). The commander's patriotic last words are, in fact, those of the modern playwright.<sup>57</sup> Demetriades dwells on the exceptional bravery of the

57 Both of these scenes recur in an anonymous 1816 play, entitled *Leonidas at Thermopylae*, a Romanticist, anti-tyrannical drama in five acts and in prose. The 1816 publication of this heroic drama (in Vienna) had been paid for by a captain from Hydra, an island that would play an important role in the Greek Revolution. See further Chatzепantazes 2006, 32–4,

Spartans by having Xerxes react with amazement at their strong sense of self-sacrifice for a free Greece. This leads, somewhat tangentially, to a scene in which the King learns more about the agonistic ethos associated with the Olympic Games, in which the Greeks compete not for money but for an olive wreath. This brief excursus, too, finds its origin in Herodotus (8.26), who has Tigranes, son of Artabazus, utter the words that Demetriades has given to Xerxes:

ὦ! καὶ τί γένος εἶν' αὐτό! μοῦ ἔρχεται ἀπορία  
 νὰ μὴ ζητῇ χρυσάργυρα πολύτιμα βραβεῖα,  
 μόνον νὰ ἀγωνίζεται γιὰ 'να κλωνὶ ἐλαίας  
 ἢ δάφνης ἢ κουκουναριᾶς ἢ πράσινῃς ἰτέας! (9)

Oh, what kind of people is this! I am stunned that they do not ask for valuable prizes in gold or silver, but compete for just a branch of olive or laurel or acorn or green willow!

The Persian forces suffer increasing losses but manage to invade and sack Athens. Demaratus rightly remains skeptical before the vainglorious Xerxes:

... γιὰτὶ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι  
 δὲν ὑπετάχθησαν σ' ἐσὲ ἐκεῖνοι οἱ γενναῖοι,  
 τὰ τείχη τοὺς ὑπέταξες, ὄχι τοὺς Ἀθηναίους! (9)

... because it wasn't the Athenians, those brave men, who submitted to you, you subdued the walls, not the Athenians!

These lines are reminiscent of Aeschylus' *Persians* 348–9, part of the exchange between Queen Atossa and the Persian messenger:

Βα. ἔτ' ἄρ' Ἀθηνῶν ἔστ' ἀπόρρητος πόλις;  
 Αγγ. ἀνδρῶν γὰρ ὄντων ἔρκος ἐστὶν ἀσφαλές.

Queen: Is then the city of Athens not yet destroyed?

Messenger: No, with her men still living, she is an impregnable bastion.

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254–5; Puchner 2000, 166 and 2006, 169; Spathes 1986, 24, 32–4, 51; and Van Steen 2010, 129–30. It is tempting to relate the 1816 *Leonidas at Thermopylae* to a 5,000-lines-long but popular epic poem, titled *Leonidas* (1737) and authored by Richard Glover (1712–1785) in Britain. Glover, too, had found his inspiration mainly in Herodotus. On Glover's influential poem, see Macgregor Morris (forthcoming). On the legacy of the battle of Thermopylae in antiquity and through the ages, see recently Matthew and Trundle 2013.

Both Herodotus and Plutarch were on the mind of Adamantios Koraes (1748–1833), the well-known expatriate Greek national educationalist at the center of a circle of *logioi*, whose writings Demetriades likely perused and whose edifying rhetoric he tapped. Koraes recommended a reading list for the younger generations of the new Greek nation (published in his *Prolegomena to the Ancient Greek Authors*) that concentrated on “that part of the Greek glory, that is, the Greek war against the Persians.”<sup>58</sup> He referred to books 7–8 of Herodotus as a means to that greater end: the sections he singled out, *Histories* 7.201 through 8.100, cover the battles of Thermopylae and Salamis.<sup>59</sup> Koraes commended Plutarch as well and included his *Parallel Lives* in his Hellenic Library, a corpus of editions of seminal classical texts, with which to instruct the younger Greek generations.<sup>60</sup>

*Act Three (9–11, Manuscript Folios 16a–18b): Xerxes at Salamis*

Act Three roars with the din of the sea battle of Salamis. Xerxes, however, is preoccupied with his new flame, Queen Artemisia (Herodotus 7.99, 8.68–9, 87–8, 101–3). Artemisia is far more capable of focusing on the King’s duties as a military commander than her star-struck lover. She brings Xerxes—and the reader—back to the reality of the unfolding sea battle. She draws the King’s attention to the courage and skill of Themistocles, the Athenian strategist, who, by entering into the fray himself, contrasts sharply with the aloof Eastern despot, seated on his throne on the hilltop of Egaleo (cf. Aesch. *Pers.* 466–7). The vain Xerxes ponders what a wondrous sight he must make for his troops to behold, but then comes to the sudden realization that his fleet is losing the battle. The cowardly King flees in a panic, abandoning Mardonius and his infantry. The scene then shifts to the Athenian camp and presents a meeting between Themistocles and Aristides, who objects to the former’s plan to go in pursuit of Xerxes. With a distinct touch of irony, Demetriades finally shows

58 Koraes 1984, 1: 173.

59 Van Steen 2010, 134. Among the Western admirers of Herodotus were Volney (1757–1820), a key critic of Oriental despotism, and Flaubert (1821–1880). The influential French historical novel and travel book, *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce* (translated in English as *Travels of Anacharsis the Younger in Greece*), was influenced by Herodotus as well. Written by the Abbé Barthélemy (1716–1795), this eight-volume book of 1788 was republished many times throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a “manifesto of late Enlightenment’s humanism” that championed (republican-style) liberty (Tolias 2005, 73). Barthélemy’s Scythian hero is one of the Hellenized descendants of the legendary Anacharsis mentioned by Herodotus (4.46, 76–7). The work spoke to the imagination of Regas, who produced a translation (and a mural map) of the novel in Modern Greek.

60 Koraes 1984, 1: 172. Van Steen 2010, 29, 134. Koraes published Plutarch’s *Lives* in six volumes between 1809 and 1814. See further Xenophontos 2013 and 2014.



the once powerful King compelled to cross the Hellespont in a humble fishing boat to find safety in Asia.

The perception of Xerxes as a despot has a long history that can be traced back to Aeschylus' depiction: the tragedian's Xerxes displays the kind of irrational, savage, and authoritarian behavior that must signal what the charged concept of "despot" had come to mean to a fifth-century BCE Athenian audience: the tyrant's self-serving and heartless attitude cannot but strive to curtail the freedom of the Greeks in addition to that of his servile subjects. The Xerxes of Aeschylus stands in sharp contrast to his self-controlled father for seeking to impose the kind of slave-to-master relationship (*Pers.* 50) under which his subjects (barely) manage to function but which the Greeks reject.<sup>61</sup> For Demetriades more than for Aeschylus, however, despotism is by definition external, Oriental, and politically and racially inferior. His recurring emphasis on Eastern despotism and unbridled sensuality must be identified as a structural feature of the Orientalist discourse, which, conventionally, confounded political despotism with sexual promiscuity; despotism and sensuality were perceived to be endemic in the Orient.<sup>62</sup> Exoticism, ownership, sensuality, and despotism, all key topics of nineteenth-century Orientalist literature, prove to be germane parts and catalyst plotlines of the 1805 melodrama.

*Act Four (11–13, Manuscript Folios 18b–23b): Affirming Greek Identity and Unity*

The still overbearing Mardonius demands submission from the Athenians. Afraid that their allies might succumb, the Spartans try to convince them to commit to a final battle against the Persian infantry. Aristides dispels the Spartans' apprehension by delivering a memorable speech stating the Athenians' unshaken position (Herodotus 8.144):

No doubt it was natural that the Lacedaemonians should dread the possibility of our making terms with Persia; nonetheless it shows a poor estimate of the spirit of Athens. There is not so much gold in the world nor land so fair that we would take it for pay to join the common enemy and bring Greece into subjection. There are many compelling reasons against our doing so, even if we wished: the first and greatest is the burning of the temples and images of our gods—now ashes and rubble. It is our bounden

61 Kennedy concludes: "Xerxes is intended to stand as a paradigm of tyranny" (2013, 80).

62 On the relations between eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophy, Orientalist discourse, and contemporary literary and fictional outlets, see one of the older but pioneering studies: Grosrichard's *Structure du sérail: La fiction du despotisme asiatique dans l'Occident classique* (1979 and 1998).

duty to avenge this desecration with all our might—not to clasp the hand that wrought it. Again, there is the Greek nation—the community of blood and language, temples and ritual, and our common customs; if Athens were to betray all this, it would not be well done. We would have you know, therefore, if you did not know it already, that so long as a single Athenian remains alive we will make no peace with Xerxes.<sup>63</sup>

Aeschylus' *Persians* 402–5, or the famous paean, touches poetically on many of the same “compelling reasons” for the Greeks to launch into the fray at Salamis, in pursuit of freedom for their fatherland and families, paternal shrines and tombs. Some classical scholars draw on Herodotus 8.144 to read Aeschylus' lines in a “panhellenic” light. With a dint of modern “panhellenism,” the Athenians of Demetriades' play declare to the Spartan envoys:

μεγάλην (τώρα) ἔκπληξιν ἔχω καὶ ἀπορίαν  
 σ' ἐσᾶς τοὺς Λακεδαίμονας νᾶχ' ἀμφιβολίαν  
 καὶ νὰ μὴν ἀποβλέπετε παρὰ στήν δυστυχίαν  
 πῶχομεν κατὰ τὸ παρὸν καὶ τὴν στενοχωρίαν  
 ἀλησμονῶντας ὅλων μας τὴν μεγαλοψυχίαν  
 καὶ τὴν ἀνδραγαθίαν μας καὶ γενναιοδωρίαν  
 ἦλθατε νὰ μᾶς τάξετε μικράς παρηγορίας,  
 ὅμως νὰ φανερώσετε στὴ Λακεδαιμονία,  
 ὅτι τοῦ κόσμου ὅλου τοῦ τὰ πλούτη, τὰ φλωρία,  
 δὲν θέλει εἶναι ἄρκετὰ στὸ νὰ μᾶς ἀπατήσουν  
 καὶ τὴν κοινὴν διαφέντευσιν τσ' Ἑλλάδος νὰ ἀφήσουν. (12)

I am very surprised now and at a loss to understand that you, the Spartans would have doubts and would not look beyond our current misfortune and sadness, forgetful of the strong spirit, courage, and generosity that all of us have shown. You came with the promise of small acts of consolation. However, make it known to Sparta that there is not enough riches or money in the world to entice us and have us abandon the common rule of Hellas.

Aristeides delivers a strong “no” answer also to the delegation sent by Mardonius, which makes for another patriotic culmination point that appealed to the early nineteenth-century Greek public. Mardonius tries sending

63 Trans. de Sélincourt 2003, 552–53. Cartledge provides more context to the above passage (2006, 249–50).

one more embassy to the Athenians, but they respond by stoning the spokesperson proposing a treaty with the Persians (Herodotus 9.5: the episode about the stoning of Lycidas and his family). The Greeks join together to deal the final blow to the enemy's infantry. Aware that the end is near, Mardonius laments his fate at Marathon, the battle site of Persian defeat a decade earlier. The Greeks proclaim victory in a closing scene of celebration and unity.

*Act Five (13–14, Manuscript Folios 24a–25b): History as Prophecy*

The final act prolongs the spirit of celebration and harmony and drives home the play's teleological focal point: Greek virtue and victory through the ages. Plot-wise, however, the play is now past its climax. A messenger reports the details of Xerxes' inglorious defeat to Persia personified in a female figure (who substitutes for Aeschylus' Queen Atossa in the penultimate scene of his tragedy). The final image is that of a Greek chorus or, rather, two half-choruses, articulating the moral of the story: historically, the Greeks have succeeded in throwing off the Eastern yoke, which vouches for their future ability to do the same (perhaps alluding to Aesch. *Pers.* 821–4). In other words, the Greeks are ready and able to throw off the Turkish yoke.

Τὸ παράδειγμα Περσίας πάρτε κι' ἄλλες γενεές  
 στὸ ἐξῆς νὰ μὴ τολμάτε μὲ καρδιές ἑλληνικές ...  
 "Ἄν στοὺς μεταγενεστέρους χρόνους ἤθελε φανῇ  
 κι ἄλλος σὰν αὐτὸν τὸν Ξέρξη βέβαια θεὸ νὰ χαθῇ ... (14)

Let future generations look at Persia for an example to not try to dare  
 Greek hearts ... If in future times another man like Xerxes were to appear,  
 he, too, will, for sure, be lost.

With a touch of jingoism, Demetriades emphasizes battle sites, spoils, and glory. With the flair of militancy, he keeps up the pretense of his own proximity to or even engagement in the (future) struggle. Unlike Demetriades, however, Aeschylus himself had taken part in the war, had lost a brother in battle, and had seen the fate of veterans: the ancient play stresses not triumphalism but loss, and therefore remains tragic.<sup>64</sup> Demetriades has long prepared his reader for the ease with which he has taken the tragic out of the tragedy, and he continues to use Aeschylus' dramatic form as a shell for a last grand finale. After

64 Recent scholarship (e.g. Gruen 2011, 9–20) has dismissed the triumphalism that Broadhead had recognized and highlighted in his 1960 commentary on Aeschylus' *Persians*.

making a sacrifice to thank the gods, the entire chorus chants a victory song of Greek glory sustained from the Trojan War on and through the ages:

Ἦρωες ποὺ τὴν Τρωάδα ἐπορθήσατε ποτὲ  
ἐπαινεῖτε τὴν Ἑλλάδα ὡς πατρώοι ζηλωταί,  
ποὺ ἐδάμασε τοὺς Πέρσας μὲ μεγάλην τους φθοράν·  
κι αὐτὸ θέλουν μιμηθοῦσι κι ἄλλα ἔθνη στὸ ἐξῆς,  
διὰ τὰ ἀνδραγαθοῦσι ὅσα εἶναι ἐπὶ γῆς,  
καὶ παράδειγμα θὲ νᾶχουν γένος τὸ ἐλληνικὸν  
εὐγενές, σοφόν, γενναῖον καὶ τῷ ὄντι ἡρωϊκόν ... (14)

You, heroes, who once destroyed Troy, sing the praises of Greece, as defenders of the fatherland: Greece brought the Persians down with great destruction, and other peoples will follow their example in the future, to show brave virtue for as long as they dwell on earth, and for an example they will have the Greek nation, noble, wise, valiant, and truly heroic.

### Conclusion

Demetriades' *Persians* or *Xerxes* draws on a wide range of sources to strengthen modern Greek revolutionary resolve. Aeschylus' *Persians* provides the models of play, direct inquiry, and indirect praise, but Herodotus furnishes the sought-after vignettes of Greek heroism and integrity. The work and legacy of both Aeschylus and Herodotus spurs Demetriades to perceive of the Persian Wars as acts for performance, as prompts to performativity, as cues to think of history as a re-enactment—of victory as re-enactable. Also, Aeschylus' *Persians* allows Demetriades to treat the Greek-Persian language barrier as a surpassable hurdle that can conventionally be ignored. Along with other members of the pre-revolutionary Greek intelligentsia, Demetriades makes the exponents of ancient Greek glory and also the Greek historical sources undergo a process of reappraisal: from Aeschylus to Herodotus and to Plutarch, they all are measured on the scale of their perceived patriotism and their works are mined for their proto-nationalist merit. Demetriades portrays Xerxes, not as a three-dimensional character, but as a bloodthirsty and hybristic Eastern despot. This Xerxes shares with his Aeschylean counterpart that he is prone to follow his emotions, rather than the logic imparted by his more moderate father. Painted in bold Orientalist strokes, the Eastern enemy as personified by Xerxes is presented as weak and morally depraved. The playwright likely intended for the court intrigue that he depicted to reflect on the intrigues at the Ottoman court,

with which he had become acquainted through his contacts with elite Greek circles serving in the Ottoman administration. The melodramatic scenes that draw from Metastasio confound the realm of classical literature with that of contemporary reality: they refract early nineteenth-century social and political preoccupations. Demetriades' play takes the reader back to the era prior to 1821 and to geographical regions other than the subsequent hotbeds of Greek-Turkish strife. Opposed to Ottoman decline, thinly disguised as the Persian decline, stands the "panhellenic" Greek spirit of courage and self-sacrifice that cannot but win the impending revolutionary struggle.

The engagement of Classics and Philhellenism with Orientalism and also with Said's contribution remains a work in progress. The example of Demetriades' play adds a case study relevant to Aeschylus and also to the Persian Wars (broadly defined to include their later tradition of intersecting discourses and complexities). With and in Demetriades, we discover the heterogeneity of Orientalism, an aspect that Said had left underexplored. This heterogeneity that pivots on modern as well as ancient Greece may prompt the shifts in perception and reception that may finally dislodge Said's simplistic binarism.<sup>65</sup>

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# Transtextual Transformations of *Prometheus Bound* in Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*: Prometheus' Gifts to Humankind

Fabien Desset

## Introduction: Shelley's Reception of Aeschylus

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822) probably discovered Aeschylus at Eton College, where he studied between 1805 and 1810. He was about 18 when he quoted the *Eumenides* (48–54) in an epigraph to *The Wandering Jew, or the Victim of the Eternal Avenger* (1809–1810), obviously to illustrate the theme of retribution, but above all to announce the horrible witch of canto four. At Oxford, his friend Thomas Jefferson Hogg shared with him his enthusiasm for the Classics, but Shelley rejected them for a time because he considered them as emblems of the establishment culture, as he wrote in a letter to William Godwin. The author of *Political Justice* (1797) soon convinced him to review his judgement and at least study the philosophers and historians. The young poet then ordered a bilingual edition of Aeschylus, whose *Prometheus Bound* he eventually quoted in Greek (355) in a letter to his future wife Mary Godwin.<sup>1</sup> The allusion to the *Eumenides* in *The Wandering Jew* had already shown his fascination for monstrous creatures; Shelley's reference to Typhon in the letter does the same—for the sake of the sublime, as an outlet for his frustrations or anger, or to express subversion and revolt. “Alastor” (1815), in which the fictional Poet vainly runs after Ideal love, the product of his imagination, displays a couple of Promethean motifs, from Io's wanderings to the Hybristes river and Caucasus, whose description is mostly based on Shelley's first visit of the Alps and modern narratives. Thomas Love Peacock, another friend who was fond of the Classics, explains that the very title, derived from the Greek *alastôr*, is based on Aeschylus' evil demons or *kaka-daimôn*.<sup>2</sup>

During the summer of 1816, Shelley, Mary, and Byron's evocations of Aeschylus and, more particularly, of his Prometheus, led to the composition

1 P. B. Shelley 1964, 1:316–8 and 411, letters n°198 and 271 of July 29, 1812 and October 25, 1814 respectively.

2 Peacock 1970, 60.

of Byron's "Prometheus" (July), Mary's *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (1818), and Percy Bysshe's *Prometheus Unbound* (1818–1820). The Titan is a romantic figure *par excellence*, a powerful artist, as in Goethe's version (1773), a rebel but also the victim of his passions, which can turn him into his own enemy, like Orc in William Blake's syncretic mythology or Prometheus/the Phantasm of Jupiter in Shelley's first act. The French Terror (1793–1794) had indeed shown how pure idealism could be perverted into something monstrous. By the time Shelley composed his "lyrical drama," both Aeschylus and Prometheus had thus become familiar to him. He occasionally reread the Greek tragedian, compared him to Zeuxis or Phidias to consider the merits of ancient painting and sculpture,<sup>3</sup> and eventually transposed the *Persians* into *Hellas* (1821), another "goat-play" anticipating the Turks' last days in the Greek war of independence. If Shelley ultimately favoured Sophocles over Aeschylus, the latter accompanied him throughout his life—*Agamemnon* was also among his favourites—and definitely influenced his poetry. *Prometheus Unbound*, however, is arguably Shelley's masterpiece.

### A Summary of Shelley's Transformations of Aeschylus' *Prometheia*

Gérard Genette's critical tool of transtextuality<sup>4</sup> has proved useful in the study of Shelley's rewriting of *Prometheus Bound*, because it transcends source studies by offering a close textual analysis of concrete formal and thematic transformations. This chapter will therefore use Genette's terminology, which will be explained along the way. I start with a summary of the transformations already studied in previous articles, so as to give the context for Shelley's rewriting of the Titan's theft of fire and gifts to mankind.

The first obvious transformation is formal,<sup>5</sup> since Shelley necessarily translates part of *Prometheus Bound* into English (the names of the characters to start with) and since he uses blank verse. It is also architectural (relating to genre), as the poet turns the ancient play into a modern one, divided into four acts and sometimes scenes, unlike Aeschylus' play. Shelley also calls it a "lyrical drama," giving more prominence to the descriptive lyrics of the chorus than to action proper. The four-act structure actually mirrors the four plays that

3 P. B. Shelley 1964, 2: 53, letter n°486 of November 9, 1818, to T. L. Peacock, and "Preface" to *Prometheus Unbound* in P. B. Shelley 1988–2011, 2: 456.

4 *Palimpsestes*, 1982, trans. 1997.

5 Desset 2010b, 101–6.

tragedians were supposed to write for the Dionysia, the last one being a satyr play. Shelley had originally intended three acts only, though, and did not add a fourth one until 1820, when, instead of a satyr play, he composed a cosmic celebration of the Promethean rejuvenation of the universe. The first act, in which the Titan is bound, is where the poet recasts Aeschylus' first play; the second act recounts the quest for truth of Prometheus' ideal love and double, Asia—a metaphysical unbinding as it were; and the third act, in which Hercules frees the Titan, shows the good effects of Prometheus' freedom and his retreat into a temple-like cave, so that it may echo *Prometheus the Fire Bearer*. Shelley's drama, and the first act in particular, are therefore at once a continuation and transposition of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* and of what little the poet knew about the rest of the *Prometheia*. In his preface, the poet indeed allows room for both imitation:

There is a similarity between [...] Aeschylus and Euripides [...], each has a generic resemblance under which their specific distinctions are arranged. If this similarity be the result of imitation, I am willing to confess that I have imitated ...

and transformation:

The Greek tragic writers [...] by no means conceived themselves bound to adhere to the common interpretation, or to imitate in story, as in title, their rivals and predecessors. [...] Had I framed my story on this model, I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Aeschylus [...].<sup>6</sup>

In terms of style, Shelley also often contaminates<sup>7</sup> the play with John Milton's archaisms in *Paradise Lost* (1667), which also enables the poet to adapt the Greek myth to the Christian extratextual context.

Although act one recasts *Prometheus Bound*, the scene is set after the events recounted in the ancient play, since Prometheus is already bound and being devoured by the eagle. The diegesis encompasses modern times, through references to Christ and the French Revolution, while Prometheus' freeing in

6 P. B. Shelley 1988–2011, 2: 475, 472. All text of *Prometheus Unbound* is from this edition, 2: 456–649.

7 While 'annexation' consists in borrowing one distinct element from another hypotext, like the Furies, 'contamination' (Genette 1997, 46–7) is more diffuse and merges one hypotext with another, for instance the plot of Aeschylus' play with the style of Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

Act III is set in a utopian near future; Shelley thus writes about the spirit of his own time, as he directed Byron to do.<sup>8</sup> The poet also orientalizes the setting<sup>9</sup> by binding Prometheus to the Indian Caucasus, standing for the corrupt (but about to be regenerated) West, and locating his soul sister Asia-Venus in the vale of Kashmir, the Ideal bower of Love. To flesh out these two antithetical places, Shelley, who had never been to Greece or Asia, uses his experience of the Alps and the motifs developed in "Alastor" and "Mont Blanc" (1816), and his more recent experience of Italy, which he describes in his letters. Despite his wish to orientalize Aeschylus' diegesis, he actually westernises it through concrete allusions to England, France, Switzerland, and Italy. Thanks to transaesthetic allusions and ekphrases, he thus structures his drama and concretizes Aeschylus' brief descriptions of landscape and characters.

Indeed, on March 26, 1818, Shelley had already described the mountains near Les Echelles in Savoy as "Promethean":

The rocks, which cannot be less than 1000 feet in perpendicular height, sometimes overhang the road on each side, and almost shut out the sky. The scene is like that described in the "Prometheus" of Aeschylus; vast rifts and caverns in granite precipices; wintry mountains, with ice and snow above; the loud sounds of unseen waters within the caverns; and walls of toppling rocks, only to be scaled, as he describes, by the winged chariot of the Ocean Nymphs.<sup>10</sup>

Admittedly, this is less Aeschylean than Radcliffian. Act I also introduces or develops new characters. From *Eumenides*, Shelley annexes the Furies,<sup>11</sup> possibly because he had heard about them in a fragment of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Unbound* preserved in Cicero's *Tusculanae Disputationes* (2.10.23–5): "Will you tell me what there is in Cicero about a drama supposed to have been written by Aeschylus under this title?"<sup>12</sup> The Furies are in turn contaminated, since they are not only described by Shelley as "dogs" (1.454) feasting on Orestes' blood, but also as Miltonic "hell-hounds" (1.408) and as "Jove's tempest-walking hounds" (1.332), like the eagle announced in *Prometheus Bound* (1021–5). Shelley gives them wings because they embody evil thoughts, Prometheus'

8 P. B. Shelley 1964, 2: 309, letter n°641, July 16, 1821.

9 Desset 2015.

10 P. B. Shelley in M. Shelley 1947, 94–5. See also p. 110 (November 15, 1818).

11 Desset 2010, 117–21.

12 P. B. Shelley 1964, 2: 43, letter n°483, October 8, 1818, to Peacock. Yet, Shelley had just completed his first act.

anger, scorn, and violence, and thoughts are winged in Shelley's poetry. They are also structurally opposed to the winged Oceanids, who are emanations of Prometheus' ideal love, Asia, and his better thoughts, love, and selflessness. From an aesthetic point of view, the Furies enable Shelley to achieve balance in the first act between beauty and horror, a kind of moral or emotional *chiar-oscuro*. As a Platonist favouring beauty over horror and considering the mind as all powerful, still Shelley tones down the violence and gore in *The Eumenides* so that the physical torture should become above all psychological.

Shelley also alters the Oceanids by reducing Aeschylus' chorus to two characters, whom he names Panthea and Ione.<sup>13</sup> In act one, these female rebels, who dare leave their father Oceanus in *Prometheus Bound* to share the Titan's fate on Caucasus, retain the descriptive function of the chorus (some of Panthea's speeches were originally intended as stage directions), but they are also characterised differently: the younger (see 2.1.46) Ione is the sensitive strophe that perceives things and the older Panthea the more intellectual or imaginative antistrophe that analyses them (Shelley does not use those technical terms here, though). They are also Platonic shadows of Asia, Prometheus' ideal, Uranian love, and Panthea in particular serves as a mediator between them, embodying Asia in act I and Prometheus in act II: the poet thus gives a harmonious symmetric view of love, as the Oceanids are also Prometheus' shadows. Critics have also seen in this system an autobiographical allusion to the *ménage à trois* formed by Shelley, Mary, and her stepsister Claire. Asia, Shelley's version of Aeschylus' Hesione contaminated by Herodotus' Asia (Hdt. 4.45), is absent from act I because the Titan is fallen and therefore separated from the Ideal, be it Love, Freedom, or Truth. They will be reunited in Act III, after she, too, has undergone a transfiguration in Act II, where she embarks on a quest for the "deep truth" (2.4.116). Since she is Prometheus' soul-sister, the Titan also embarks on that quest by proxy. The poet gives them names that refer to places: Asia is quite obvious and it is there that Shelley locates the Ideal on Earth; Ione refers to Shelley's pastoral island under Ionian skies in *Epipsychidion* (1821), a Greek isle of the Sporades where the fictional Poet wishes to retire with his love, Emily; Panthea is a fairy city in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (2.10.73) and may be considered as a civilised or evolved version of the rural pristine Ionian isle. In "Lines Written among the Euganean Hills" (1818) for instance, Shelley describes Venice both as a Venus Anadyomene rising from the sea and as an Oceanid.

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13 Desset 2010b, 107–13.

Shelley also redistributes speeches by mixing up Aeschylus' characters. Mercury thus appears quite different from the Hermes of *Prometheus Bound*.<sup>14</sup> Admittedly, as a messenger of Jupiter/J Zeus, Mercury still imitates Hermes in announcing new tortures (here the Furies) and threatening punishment by the avenging Father. Yet, his scornful speech in Aeschylus' drama, the first part of which already recasts Hephaestus' gentler address, is replaced in Shelley's by a more sympathetic one. The Romantic poet gives Hephaestus' and, to a lesser degree, Oceanus' speeches to his Mercury so that all the gods seem to sympathise with the Titan's fate, leaving Jupiter on his own with his horrible Furies. The presence of the Oceanids at the Titan's side reinforces that Manichean tableau. The truth is that Shelley loved the god Hermes/ Mercury: he translated the Homeric hymn to the heterodox trickster Hermes (1820) and had probably already seen beautiful statues of the winged god, who instantly entered the poet's pantheon of spirits, loves, and intermediary daemons, like Diotima's and Agathon's Eros in Plato's *Symposium*, which the poet had translated in the summer of 1818. He could not, therefore, make a lackey of him as Aeschylus did, all the more so since he saw a connection between the Homeric Hermes, who gave fire to humankind (*Hom. Hymn Merc.*, 134–41), and Prometheus, who, in a flashback, is described in similar terms as a "spirit of keen joy" (1.158). In fact, Mercury is more a victim in *Prometheus Unbound* than an executioner, as he is likely to be followed by remorse, like Io by the gadfly or Orestes by the Furies, for cowardly acting against his will. Like Hephaestus, however, Mercury is reluctant to torture the Titan, and the fact that it is the Furies who actually do it exonerates the god; like Oceanus, although in a less paternalistic speech, Mercury offers to intercede for the Titan with Jupiter. Mercury thus undergoes a "transmotivation"<sup>15</sup> in *Prometheus Unbound*: it is not to learn who will overthrow Jupiter that he asks Prometheus to surrender, but to see an end to the Titan's sufferings. Shelley even recasts some of Aeschylus' repetitions, as with "will" (18: *akonta ... akôn*), and metaphors, like Oceanus' "teaching" (326: *didaskalô*),<sup>16</sup> another instance of translation. The poet again contaminates these speeches with passages from *Paradise Lost*, such as the intercession of Christ for the Deucalion and Pyrrha-like Adam and Eve (11.14–20), which enables Shelley to consider the modern Christian context and make a free-thinker of Prometheus, as he refuses to bend the knee or his will before God.

14 Desset 2014, 193–204.

15 Newman and Doubinsky, trans. 1997, 330.

16 All texts of Aeschylus are cited from Herbert Weir Smyth's 1922 translation in the 1963 Loeb edition, 1: 214–315.

These transformations, which always imply a degree of imitation and translation, are overshadowed by the two main ones which Shelley mentions in his preface: firstly, the rejection of hatred, scorn, and violence, which are expurgated in the course of act one, as they do not befit Prometheus, “the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends” (473); and, secondly, the rejection of “a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind” (472).

That is a simplified summary of the intricate web of intertextuality behind Shelley’s rewriting. I will now analyse in more detail the rewriting of the analepses recounting Prometheus’ gifts to humankind, including fire.

### Prometheus’ Theft of Fire and Gifts to Humankind

Shelley only briefly alludes to the Titan’s hecatomb in Hesiod’s *Theogony* (537–72) through the metaphor “hecatombs of broken hearts” (1.7). The image first devalues<sup>17</sup> sacrificial rites, then transposes the notion onto a psychological plane, as Prometheus laments the sacrifice of idealists by “fear and self-contempt and barren hope” (8). This is not a flash-back, though, as the Titan can see that happening right now. The first real analepsis concerning Prometheus’ gifts is in the Furies’ speech (1. 542–5):

Dost thou boast the clear knowledge thou waken’dst for man?  
Then was kindled within him a thirst which outran  
Those perishing waters; a thirst of fierce fever,  
Hope, love, doubt, desire—which consume him forever.

In their corrupt views, which are meant to corrupt the Titan’s—or are already his until he has rejected hatred and despair—, these gifts of “clear knowledge” and, more metaphorically, fire (“kindle,” “consume”) have turned into ills, “perishing waters” and a “thirst” which, like the evils issued from Pandora’s jar, now torture the Titan and the human beings he stands for. While Shelley rewrites Aeschylus, the Furies recast Prometheus’ gifts, transvaluing them and only

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17 Makes less valuable or important. “Transvaluation” gives the opposite opinion or value, whereas “aggravation” makes an error or the hypotext’s condemnation even worse (Newman and Doubinsky, trans. 1997, 343–67).



retaining the most important gift after fire, “hope.”<sup>18</sup> Because of its juxtaposition in the last line with the sceptic’s “doubt,” it does not so much refer to the religious belief in an afterlife in *Prometheus Bound*, the “blind hopes” (253, see below), as to Shelley’s idealism. He had already expressed it in *Laon and Cythna* (1817), where Laon recounts that “[...] baffled hope like ice still clung to [him]” when he was bound, Prometheus-like, to the tower, and recalls the gifts of knowledge and “the lamp of hope” he received from the Chiron-like Old Man. Laon’s phrases, “ancestral chains,” “[un]foreseen,” “thou has lent ... to all,” “lamp ... not extinguish[ed]” and “beams to bear,” each refer to Aeschylus’ version of the myth (“ice clung to me” and the sun’s “shafts of agony”<sup>19</sup> echo the alternation of frost and sunlight in Hephaestus’ speech, *PV* 22–7), humanising the Titan, since Laon is a man, just as the Titan in *Prometheus Unbound* represents humankind. The context of *Laon and Cythna* is more historical than mythological, as its 1818 title, *The Revolt of Islam*, shows, and the Promethean traits are both shared by the hero Laon and giver Old Man. Hope is thus a double-edged gift for the poet, depending on what state of mind he is in, optimistic or pessimistic.

Shelley then adds “love” and “desire,” “which consume” humanity, like the Hell that Satan carries with him in *Paradise Lost* (4:73–8). Again, it is the Furies who speak, and while they may voice the poet’s scepticism and frustrating hope, it is not the truth that he and Prometheus aspire to. The “clear knowledge,” which the Furies corrupt into “perishing waters,” also sums up the knowledge and all the techniques that Prometheus transmitted to humankind, but again, these are more psychological here. The adjective “clear” suggests the knowledge of the Beautiful and the Good, Diotima’s ocean in *The Symposium*: it is now possible to see beyond the reflection or shadow of the water. Shelley here adapts the Prometheus myth to his own philosophy, which was mainly borrowed from Plato.

It is more precisely in Act II, scene four, that Shelley rewrites Aeschylus’ analeptic account of Prometheus’ gifts to humankind, with the difference, first, that it is no longer the Titan who reminds his audience of the deed, but his female double, Asia. There may be several reasons for this transmodalisation<sup>20</sup> redistributing speech. According to William Rossetti, Asia, as Nature and witness of “things material, and the drama of the human life,” is particularly fit to relate the story. For Bennett Weaver, Shelley first avoids “too close a parallel

18 This may be another nod to Hesiod’s *Theogony*, which recounts the story of Zeus’ second punishment of mankind, Pandora, who was given to Epimetheus, Prometheus’ brother, as an evil.

19 P. B. Shelley, *Laon and Cythna*, 2.21.852, 4.16.1551–7, 3.20.1280–6 (1988–2011, 2: 101, 129, 117).

20 Newman and Doubinsky, trans. 1997, 284.

to the older play," but his second hypothesis, that it "would have slowed the scene and overweighted the part" of Prometheus in act one, is more convincing. At any rate, he felt that there was a "dramatic fitness" in it.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the narcissism and pride that could be felt in the hypotext (source text) disappear in this more objective account, all the more so since Asia does not systematically refer to the sorry state of humanity before.<sup>22</sup> It is, therefore, easier to sympathise with Shelley's Titan. Even though he also reminds his audience in act one (381–2) that he "gave all / [Jupiter] has; and in return he chains [him] here," the emphasis is less on the sentiment of injustice than on the philosophical idea that Jupiter, being evil, cannot act otherwise.

The oracle Demogorgon, to whom Asia speaks, replaces the Oceanid chorus of the hypotext—even if Panthea now accompanies her sister. Paradoxically silent here, the oracle indeed plays the part of an onstage audience for the story to be told. Like Prometheus, Asia recalls what she already knows of history, but there is another transmotivation, as she does so to interpret Demogorgon, thus answering herself earlier, "He reigns," to which she replies "Who reigns?" (2.4.31–2) before giving her account, which is also her own answer. In the hypotext, Prometheus *is* the oracle who enlightens the Oceanids and foresees what will befall Io. Asia, however, is a sceptic who cannot see the "deep truth," which is "imageless" (line 116), and who can only content herself with what she already knows.<sup>23</sup> Shelley thus modernizes and humanizes this dialogue by showing the limits of knowledge, albeit divine.

The poet also condenses Aeschylus' two or three catalogues of gifts<sup>24</sup> into one stanza, but since the Furies have already alluded to them, it cannot be interpreted as a wish to avoid repetition. Indeed, Asia again mentions hope, fire, and love, whereas Aeschylus' Titan avoids repetition by making a distinction between the gifts first listed (fire and hope, *PV* 250–6) and the second series (442–506), which is at once more practical (knowledge, science, and techniques) and magical (medicine, prophesying, and divination):

PROMETHEUS. Aye, I caused mortals no longer to foresee their doom.

CHORUS. Of what sort was the cure thou didst find for this affliction?

PROMETHEUS. I caused blind hopes to dwell within their breasts.

CHORUS. A great boon was this thou gavest to mortals.

21 Rossetti 1888, 64, Weaver 1969, 127. Zillman 1960, 461, mentions other critics who compared Aeschylus and Shelley to the disadvantage of the latter.

22 Wasserman 1965, 83–4, similarly notes the transvaluation ("inversion," "irony") of the Titan's pride into virtue and of his blasphemy, his revolt, and gifts, into good things.

23 For a brilliant study of Shelley's scepticism, see Pulos 1962.

24 First quoted by Scudder 1910, 140, and Ackermann 1908, 107–11.

PROMETHEUS. And besides it was I that gave them fire.

CHORUS. What! Do creatures of a day now have flame-eyed fire?

PROMETHEUS. Aye, and therefrom they shall learn many arts.

PV. 250–6

ASIA. [...] Prometheus saw, and waked the legioned hopes  
Which sleep within folded Elysian flowers,  
Nepenthe, Moly, Amaranth, fadeless blooms,  
That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings  
The shape of Death; and Love he sent to bind  
The disunited tendrils of that vine  
Which bears the wine of life, the human heart;  
And he tamed fire which, like some beast of prey,  
Most terrible, but lovely, played beneath  
The frown of man; and tortured to his will  
Iron and gold, the slaves and signs of power,  
And gems and poisons, and all subtlest forms  
Hidden beneath the mountains and the waves.

2.4.59–71

The third person narrative and repetition of the conjunction “and” are also Biblical: “Prometheus saw, and ...” and “Man looks on his creation like a God / And sees that it is glorious [...]” a few lines below (102–3) indeed echo the Genesis as related in *Paradise Lost*, “And saw that it was good.”<sup>25</sup> This transstylization,<sup>26</sup> or stylistic contamination, Christianizes, or at least modernizes, Aeschylus’ play. At the same time, Prometheus and humanity appear to be as divine as the institutionalised God, be he Jupiter or Jehovah, or even more so, if we consider the emphasis on Love.

Shelley then at once augments, concretizes<sup>27</sup> and revalues the “blind hopes” in the hypotext and the Furies’ speech through the addition of the flower metaphor, whose function here is still to “hide” Death and “cure” men. Whereas the “cure” metaphor is debunked in the hypotext by the “blindness” of hope, suggesting error or religious fanaticism, the panacea is revalued in the hypertext even through poetry. Besides borrowing “Elysian flowers” and “Amaranth” from *Paradise Lost*, Shelley describes Death in Miltonic terms (“shape”):

25 Milton 1996, 173–5 (7.249, 309, 337, 352–3 and 395). The editor of the poem (Shelley 1988–2011, 2: 563) also mentions 4.32–4.

26 Newman and Doubinsky, trans. 1997, 226.

27 I borrow this term from Webb 1976, 103–4.

Their crowns, inwove with Amaranth and gold—  
 Immortal Amaranth, a flower which once  
 In Paradise, fast by the Tree of Life,  
 Began to bloom, but soon for Man's offence  
 To Heaven removed, where first it grew, there grows,  
 And flowers aloft, shading the Fount of Life,  
 And where the River of Bliss through midst of Heaven  
 Rolls o'er Elysian flowers her amber stream;  
 With these, that never fade, the Spirits elect  
 Bind their resplendent locks, inwreathed with beams, [...] <sup>28</sup>

The Amaranth is a flower of hope because it does not wither ("never fade" in Milton / "fadeless" in Shelley). It stands for the Ideal and the idea that the Beautiful and Bliss are eternal. More importantly, the poet substitutes human beings for Milton's angels ("the Spirits elect"), so that Prometheus might give men a forbidden, lost flower, even though they can only see a shadow of it, its scent-like "legioned hopes" or its earthly "rainbow wings" resulting from the refraction of the ideal white light through the atmosphere of the earth. Still, this is no total blindness, since the Platonic shadows in Shelley's (optimistic) poetry connect the human world to the Ideal rather than divide them. He also confers this immortality on the "Nepenthe" and the "Moly." In the *Odyssey*, Helen uses the first to make a potion, which accounts for the augmentation of Aeschylus' image of a "cure" (*pharmakon*) through the flower metaphor:

Straightway she cast into the wine of which they were drinking a drug to  
 quiet all pain and strife (*nēpenthes*), and bring forgetfulness of every ill.  
 Whoso should drink this down, when it is mingled in the bowl, would  
 not in the course of that day let a tear fall down over his cheeks, no, not  
 though before his face men should slay with the sword his brother or dear  
 son, and his own eyes beheld it.<sup>29</sup>

28 Milton 1996, 71–2 (3.352–61), noted by Jones (1952, 502), who remarks that the poet had already woven the wreaths of amaranth round the Fairy's wand in *Queen Mab* (1813, 1.107–8). "Amaranthus" in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (3.6.45) and Milton's *Lycidas* (149), quoted by Zillman (1960, 469) are less relevant. Bush (1969, 147, 162) finds that Shelley's "spiritual and scientific embellishments" and "Elizabethan profusion" makes more effeminate Aeschylus' "terrible concision" and "grim and impressive brevity." The critics of the "Anxiety of Influence" (Bloom 1973), like Aske (1985) in his study of Keats' *Endymion* (1818), consider such flowery profusion as a means to hide the gap between the Romantics and their illustrious predecessors.

29 *Od.* 4.220–30 and, for the Moly below, 10.304–6 (Murray, trans. 1966, 1: 122–3), noted by Zillman (1960, 469), who also quotes Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (4.3.41–4) and Milton's

The Egyptian Nepenthe, “a drug to quiet all pain and strife,” is a flower of forgetfulness, a “portable” version of the Lethe stream, and this second annexation is due to its connection with death. Shelley probably wished he had drunk such a potion; he would then have forgotten the death of his little daughter Clara. The “Moly” is also annexed from the *Odyssey*:

At the root it was black, but its flower was like milk. Moly the gods call it, and it is hard for mortal men to dig; but with the gods all things are possible.

It is a flower of forgetfulness too, as thanks to this antidote, Odysseus forgets his love and desire for Circe and does not turn into a pig. Prometheus, who here plays the part of Homer's Hermes, thus makes love bearable and prevents lovers from losing their minds and identities.<sup>30</sup> It is likely to have been suggested by the Nepenthe in Shelley's stream of consciousness, as well as by the gift of love. The colours of these Elysian flowers, which he actually imagines, since only the Moly is described as black and white, are earthly reflections of the light, the Ideal, and therefore form the Biblical rainbow of hope. Shelley also personifies these shadows, the earthly hues and scents coming from the flowers, in describing them as spirits endowed with thin, see-through wings, which may also refer to Iris' “saffron wings” in Virgil's *Aeneid* (4.700–3). Shelley should, in fact, have added the gift of poetry to that of hope.

As in Act I, Shelley both imitates and transforms Aeschylus by inserting a third gift, love, between hope and fire—“doubt” is still present in the scepticism of the dialogue, and “desire” is naturally overshadowed by ideal love (and the Moly) in that Uranian Venus' speech.<sup>31</sup> Aeschylus only speaks of Prometheus' excessive love for the human race. Here, love is related to hope, firstly through the Moly, and secondly in Prometheus' declaration in Act I that “all hope was vain but love” (1.824). Love thus belongs to the same paradigm or

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*Comus* (675–6, 636–7) for both flowers. Spenser insists on the calming virtue of Nepenthe (“all cares forepast / Are washed away quite from their memorie,” p. 453) and Milton alludes to the *Odyssey*.

30 Guthrie 1897, 176 (Zillman 1960, 469), already interpreted Moly as an “antidote to sensuality,” Amaranth as “intimations of immortality” and translated Nepenthe as “oblivion of ill,” but “spiritual vision” for the first, “antidote to remorse and despair” for the third and especially “antidote to frantic rebellion” for the second are less convincing; Prometheus' gift itself is already rebellion.

31 Piccoli already noted that Aeschylus does not include love, song, music, or sculpture (see below) in Prometheus' gifts and A. M. D. Hughes speaks of a spiritualization of the myth: “His Prometheus is a healer of the soul as well as an inventor of useful arts” (Zillman 1960, 469).

thematic—Elysian—field of hope. It is both universal and private love, brotherly romantic and Platonic: the phrase “bind ... the disunited tendrils” at once echoes Agathon’s “divinity who creates peace among men” and Aristophanes’ “reconciler and bond of union of their original nature [...] to heal the divided nature of man.”<sup>32</sup> Similarly, the vine standing for the human heart and the “wine of life” at once evoke the Dionysian pleasure of love, without being promiscuous, and the blood no longer shed by war. Prometheus is thus also Uranian Eros, even among humankind, but not the Circean Pandemos.

Whereas fire, the main motif of the Prometheus myth, is devalued quantitatively in Act I, where it only appears through a metaphor, Shelley devotes more lines to it in Asia’s speech. The poet substitutes the “tam[ing]” of fire for its theft, though, so that it looks more animal, like William Blake’s “Tyger” (1794), than in Aeschylus, who still used anthropomorphism (*phlogôpon*, “flame-eyed”). The expurgation of theft is not a revaluation of Prometheus, since the Romantics did not necessarily perceive robbers as criminals, but the substitution celebrates Prometheus’ and humankind’s intelligence, will, and power over their environment. The trickster’s satire has turned into the hero’s epic.

The connection between fire and crafts is syntactic in Asia’s account: the grammatical subject of the verb “tortured” in “And he tamed fire which [...] / [...] played beneath / The frown of man; and tortured to his will / Iron and gold [...] / And gems and poisons, and all subtlest forms” may as well refer to the Titan (“he”) as to fire, if the verb “tortured” is still part of the relative clause—but the semi-colon, the anaphoric “and,” and the difference between the inanimate pronoun “which” and the animate determiner “him” suggest that the subject is Prometheus. Still, there is a connection between fire and the processing of ore and metals. Like love in the Furies’ speech, fire is thus ambivalent, as the verb “torture” may suggest Blake’s Orc cycle of the tortured becoming the torturer, and as the products of fire may include “the slaves and signs of power” and “poisons,” mainly weapons and riches. This explains why, despite these gifts, humankind is now fallen. Although Aeschylus also connects fire and metals, he is less explicit as to their ambivalence, calling them “benefits” (502).

Additionally, Shelley reorders the second set of gifts (*PV* 450–506), thus starting with “Iron and gold,” due to their transformation by fire, whereas Aeschylus mentions them last (“bronze, iron, silver, and gold,” 503). They are described by both authors as hidden (“concealed beneath the earth” / “hidden beneath the mountains and the waves”), but Shelley adds the sea as well as the processing and ambivalent use of iron and gold. The poet then lists speech, thought, Science, prophecy, music, sculpture (“marble”), medicine (“herbs and

32 Pl. *Symp.* 197c–d, 191d, Shelley, trans., in Notopoulos 1949, 436 and 431, as the editor himself notes pp. 247–8.

springs"), astronomy ("implicated orbits"), sailing, and upaithric architecture and urbanization. Aeschylus starts with knowledge or thought, then goes on with agriculture and the knowledge of the seasons and astronomy, mathematics and language, the arts, the taming of brutes and especially horses (which Shelley thus transfers to "tamed" fire), and sailing. Aeschylus' second set is also divided into two: Prometheus mentions medicine, prophesying, divination and rituals, and finally metals, which looks out of place here. Indeed, while the first set was more general (hope, fire) and the second more technical (sciences), this last part could be considered as magical. Shelley, on the contrary, gives metals their proper place due to their connection with fire, then really starts with the more abstract, even magical gifts like prophecy, and ends with the more concrete achievements, as though he had sought to follow the logical course of evolution: "and speech created thought" (2.4.71), as Lord Monboddó and modern linguists would say,<sup>33</sup> so that Shelley modernises the hypotext, this time by alluding to the scientific breakthroughs of the age.

While he reduces the magical gifts of prophesying and medicine, despite the flowers of hope mentioned earlier, and expurgates the sacrifices of animals,<sup>34</sup> he augments the other intellectual achievements, the vaguer "Science," which "struck the thrones of Earth and Heaven" (2.4.74), "speech" and "thought / [...] the measure of the universe" (73), which includes Aeschylus' mathematics and grammar: "Aye, and numbers, too, chiefest of sciences, I invented for them, and the combining of letters, creative mother of the Muses' arts, wherewith to hold all things in memory (*PV* 459–61)."

Shelley's style ("measure of the Universe," "struck ... Heaven") is once again more epic, recalling the Titan's hubris and making the human mind titanic.<sup>35</sup> While Aeschylus only mentions the Muses in passing, Shelley revalues the arts. He derives music and poetry from "all-prophetic song," devoting five lines to sculpture, but omitting painting (2.4.75–84):

33 "Languages, therefore, may be said to be the parent of all arts and sciences, and to be the first step [...]" (Monboddó 1795, 4: 70, quoted by Grabo 1968, 150). E. Barnard (1944), however, was the first to show that the prioritising of speech was exceptional in Shelley's poetry (Zillman 1960, 470). Wasserman (1965, 20, 55) thus reads "created" as "ordered" or "combined" (like Coleridge's two sorts of imagination).

34 Scudder speaks of an omission of the whole (Zillman 1960, 461).

35 Wasserman 1965, 20, here sees an "adaptation" of Protagoras' "Man is the measure of all things" in Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of Ancient Philosophers*, 9.51, and Plato's *Theaetetus*, 8.152a, but Shelley's emphasis on the mind and the universe as a subjective and immaterialist reality suggests the latter. The translator (Kennedy, trans. 1881, 116, n.2) notes that the Greek *anthrôpon* here means the "human mind." Shelley had also read Berkeley and translated part of Spinoza.

[...] and the harmonious mind  
 Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song;  
 And music lifted up the listening spirit  
 Until it walked, exempt from mortal care,  
 Godlike, o'er the clear billows of sweet sound;  
 And human hands first mimicked and then mocked,  
 With moulded limbs more lovely than its own,  
 The human form, till marble grew divine,  
 And mothers, gazing, drank the love men see  
 Reflected in their race—behold, and perish.

This is the longest passage describing one gift, the Muses' arts, so that the reordering is also due to personal preference, like sculpture, as Shelley says in his Italian letters. The comparison of the mind or song to a prophetic river, as in Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" (1797), is typically Shelleyan and will be used again in scene five, while the faith in the power of poetry announces *A Defence of Poetry* (1821). Behind the billowy river and lifted spirit is also the Cascata delle Marmore at Terni, whose sound is "wonderful to hear"<sup>36</sup> and which concretizes this passage on transcendence, just as the Coleridgian river gives shape to human imagination. Besides, the poet contaminates his hypotext with Plato's liquid Eros, who "is poured forth in overflowing pleasure, and propagates."<sup>37</sup> Indeed, Diotima, who actually compares Eros to Poetry in a passage at the origin of Shelley's definition in *A Defence of Poetry*, not only mentions sexual reproduction, but the progeny of the mind (*Symp.* 206). Shelley thus identifies Love as the main force behind poetry. Like Apollo or Hermes, Man transcends the material world and can walk on intangible things, but the "billows" more directly suggest Christ in *Matt.* 14:26, as Wasserman notes: "And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit."<sup>38</sup> The poet thus means both the human mind or soul and the transformation of humankind into intermediary daemons. He only uses the Biblical image, not the motivation of Jesus, who is testing the Apostles. Similarly, there is a transmotivation of Prometheus' gift, since the arts are no longer meant to fix knowledge in memory, hence the suppression of Mnemosyne, but to convey pleasure, transcendence, and even, through inspiration and deduction, the knowledge of the future. Shelley's emphasis on God-like mankind both aggravates and revalues Prometheus' transgression.

36 P. B. Shelley 1964, 2:55–6, n°487 of November 20, 1818, to Peacock.

37 Pl. *Symp.* 207, Shelley, trans., in Notopoulos 1949, 445.

38 Wasserman 1965, 93.



Contrary to Plato's *Republic*, in which the mimetic arts are twice removed from the Good, Shelley connects the arts, and especially sculpture, more directly to that transcendental Ideal, because they have reached perfection—the past tense allows Shelley to refer to ancient sculpture. True, art still imitates nature, but the polysemous verb “mocked” suggests an ironical reversal: it is now nature that mimics art, which idealised it. The absorption of sculptural beauty by mothers who “drank the love men see” and its effect on gestation here combine Agathon's liquid Eros with Winckelmann's *History of Ancient Art*:

The praise of the beautiful was so great that Lacedemonian women kept in their bedrooms the statues of Nireus, Narcissus, Hyacinth or of Castor and Polydeuces, to bear beautiful children.<sup>39</sup>

The hyperbole “behold and perish,” however, partly transliterates Damon's sigh about his love for Nysa in Virgil's *Eclogues* (8.41): *Ut vidi, ut perii*.<sup>40</sup> In Shelley's text, “perish,” may be synonymous with the verb “die” and suggest orgasm—in Mair's translation of Oppian, Lacedemonian women “rejoice” and “are fluttered”—or the “despair” of doomed lovers, like Damon, of the Pygmalion-like lover of Ideal beauty or of the modern artist facing perfect ancient fragments. Although Shelley's infinitives “behold” and “perish” suggest men as subject of the verbs, “Behold and perish” actually seems to refer to women. The phrase also alludes to the myths of mortals beholding the divine, like Semele before Jupiter. Thus, in the thematic field of Promethean transgression, art is, through classical and modern contaminations, substituted for fire.

Shelley only devotes two lines to medicine: “He told the hidden power of herbs and springs, / And Disease drank and slept.” “Death grew like sleep” (2:4 85–6) is a condensation of “[...] I showed them how to mix soothing remedies wherewith they now ward off all their disorders” and what precedes it (*PV* 477–83), since, as we have seen, Shelley systematically omits what life was like before Prometheus' gifts. However, he personifies sickness, which is not just driven away, but lulled to sleep. On the one hand, disease and death are not totally gotten rid of, a realistic view; on the other, the comparison of death to sleep alludes to the Golden Age in Hesiod's *Works and Days* (136–7),<sup>41</sup> which is more idealistic: the Titan's gifts announce a new Golden Age. Shelley then spends as much time as Aeschylus on astronomy and the seasons (2.4.87–91):

39 Huber, French trans. 1801–03, 1: 318, my translation. Winckelmann cites Oppian's *Cynegetica* 1.357–67.

40 Swinburne 1926, 15: 361.

41 As Locock (Zillman 1960, 472) already remarked, quoting Shelley's note to *Queen Mab* (1812), 8.211–2.

He taught the implicated orbits woven  
 Of the wide-wandering stars, and how the Sun  
 Changes his lair, and by what secret spell  
 The pale Moon is transformed, when her broad eye  
 Gazes not on the interlunar sea[...].

Yet, while in Aeschylus the study of the stars and seasons has an agricultural relevance (PV 454–8), Shelley considers astronomy for its own sake, the same transmotivation or demotivation as for the arts. The aristocratic poet, who had studied astronomy in his youth, contrasts with Aeschylus, who is more down-to-earth here, although also belonging to the elite. The taming of brutes (“I, too, first brought brute beasts beneath the yoke,” “I harnessed horses and made them obedient to the rein, to be the adornment of wealth and luxury” PV 462–6) is even transferred to the “taming” of the wilder fire, which Shelley compares to “some beast of prey” in the passage studied above, while the luxury implied by the possession of horses is transferred to the possession of “Iron and gold” and “gems” in the same passage. A vegetarian, Shelley refused to make the subjection of animals Prometheus’ gift, hence the expurgation, too, of sacrifices.

Shelley’s “implicated orbits” and especially “interlunar sea” are perhaps more modern and scientific than Aeschylus’ “risings of the stars and their settings,”<sup>42</sup> so that the extratextual context again transforms the gifts. He is also more explicit when he makes a distinction between the stars (*astrôn*), the sun and the moon, which he adds. Astronomy and science generally speaking may have another end here. The removal of superstition still suggested by the personification of “his lair,” the anthropomorphism of “her broad eye” and the metaphor of “secret spell.” Yet, Shelley does not shun such personifications, as astronomy is definitely poetry. He thus borrows the “interlunar sea” from Milton’s *Samson Agonistes* (1671), in which the Moon is already personified: “[...] silent as the Moon / When she deserts the night / Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.”<sup>43</sup> The Romantic transfers her cave to the Sun’s lair and chooses a more picturesque motif for her, the sea, which also serves as transition to the next gift.

42 Grabo 1930, 169–70, mentions Herschel’s discovery “that our solar system is moving towards the constellation Hercules,” but the Sun’s changing lairs more likely refers to the East and West, Aeschylus’ “risings of the stars and their sittings,” or to the ocean, as in the Homeric hymn to Helios, which Shelley translated.

43 87–9, first quoted by Zupitza and Chick (1899; Zillman 1960, 473). That Shelley borrows the phrase from Milton is verified in the fourth act (206–13), in which he mentions the cave, and in “With a Guitar, to Jane” (1822, 23–4), in which he borrows the silence motif.

Shelley was also fond of sailing, so he goes so far as to imitate Aeschylus' periphrasis and compound adjective *lino-pter*: "He taught to rule, as life directs the limbs, / The tempest-winged chariots of the Ocean" (2.4.92–3) recasts "'Twas I and no one else that contrived the mariner's flaxen-winged car to roam the sea" (*PV* 467–8). However, Shelley metonymically substitutes the "tempest" for the material of sails, "flaxen" (*lino-*), and the broader "Ocean" for the "sea" (*thalassa*), which makes Man's achievement even more epic, as does the added simile that turns the sea-chariots into extensions and limbs of titanic Man. The verb "teach" insists on the transfer of Prometheus' titanic powers to humankind. The reference to the "Indian" in "And the Celt knew the Indian [...]" (2.4.94), again modernises the diegesis, even though Shelley uses the term "Celt," which the ancients used to refer to the people north of the western Mediterranean.<sup>44</sup> The verb "knew" is neutral, but since Prometheus also introduced love, the gift of sailing can be seen as a means to "bind / The disunited tendrils" of humankind.

Finally, when Aeschylus mentions houses, he focuses on building (450–3):

Knowledge had they neither of houses built of bricks and turned to face the sun, nor yet of work in wood; but dwelt beneath the ground like swarming ants, in sunless caves.

Shelley focuses on art and urbanism by devaluing building and revaluing the sun and picturesque scenery (2.4.93–6):

[...] Cities then  
Were built, and through their snow-like columns flowed  
The warm winds, and the azure ether shone,  
And the blue sea and shadowy hills were seen.

This is obviously a contamination of the upaithric temples, theatres, and houses that Shelley saw in Pompeii, and then in Paestum and Rome:

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44 Although the reference may be to India, an important space for imagining in both ancient and 19th-century arts, and India plays a role in Shelley's work as an Ideal, it may also be a reference to American Indians, since Shelley sees greater political and social hope in America than in contemporary India. In this case, Shelley's Ocean would more particularly refer to the Atlantic.

Above & between the multitudinous shafts of the [?snow-like] columns, was seen the blue sea reflecting the purple heaven of noon above it, & supporting as it were on its line the dark lofty mountains of Sorrento [...]. [The Greeks] lived in harmony with nature, & the interstices of their incomparable columns, were portals as it were to admit the spirit of beauty which animates this glorious universe to visit those whom it inspired. [...] Their theatres were all open to the mountains & the sky. Their columns that ideal type of a sacred forest with its roof of interwoven tracery admitted the light & wind, the odour & the freshness of the country penetrated the cities. Their temples were mostly upaithric; & the flying clouds the stars or the deep sky were seen above.<sup>45</sup>

Since Shelley already identifies Pompeii as “a Greek colony,” Italian scenery and architecture can be used as a concrete setting for his Promethean diegesis, which is yet inadvertently westernised; Italy is indeed closer to the Atlantic than modern Ukraine, where Aeschylus’ play is set. Taking his cue from Aeschylus’ emphasis on sunlight, he borrows the upaithric motif from his letters embodied in Pompeii’s open theatres and low houses, Paestum’s colonnades instead of closed doors, and the Roman Pantheon’s *oculus*, which not only let in sunlight, but all the influences of nature. This transcends mere comfort to imply a connection with nature and beauty, and therefore gives an aesthetic and philosophical dimension to Prometheus’ gift. Through this condensation and versification of the letter, Shelley also experiences the pleasure of recollecting in tranquillity the enchanting scenery he saw in Italy, while transforming description into a series of poetic symbols.

### Conclusion

Of course, the change of the extratextual context, from the Italian scenery, through modern scientific breakthroughs to a culture influenced by the Bible, first of all modernizes and westernizes the Promethean diegesis. Shelley’s expurgation of animal abuse, reduction of the magical gifts and, therefore, of superstition or religion, and his augmentation, even poetic expansion, as in the case of hope, then show his preferences, be they political or aesthetic. Indeed, his preference for art and knowledge for their own sakes over more practical applications underlines a difference between him and Aeschylus,

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45 Shelley 1964, 2: 73–5, letter n°491, January 23–4, 1819, to Peacock. Also quoted by Everest and Matthews 1988–2011, 2: 563, n. 94–7. Jones suggests the adjective “sunshiny,” but Shelley often uses “snowy,” “snow-white” and, as in his poem, “snow-like.”

who, although belonging to the elite, too, appears more connected with the hardships suffered by the people. Because of Asia's third person narrative and his absence in act two, Prometheus also recedes into the background, leaving greater room to humankind, whom the Romantic poet describes as "titanic." Above all, Shelley's rewriting of Prometheus' gifts highlights love, which he largely annexes from his own recent translation of Plato's *Symposium* and which is sometimes seen as the goal of the other gifts.

The same conclusions can be drawn from the other transformations, from Prometheus' rejection of violence and hatred to the redemption of Hermes. In Aeschylus, Shelley not only finds inspiration, but also a canvas to paint a picture that will be more relevant to him and his age, a necessary correction of the literary myth that emphasises love and hope, in this optimistic lyrical drama, for a better future.

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## Aeschylus and *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, by Mary Shelley

Ana González-Rivas Fernández

### Mary Shelley: Discovering Aeschylus

“I busied myself to think of a story—a story to rival those which had excited us to this task. One which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature and awaken thrilling horror—one to make the reader dread to look round, to curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart.”<sup>1</sup> So Mary Shelley describes the origins of *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*, the novel that was destined to become a classic of Gothic literature.<sup>2</sup> Since its first edition in 1818, the story of the young doctor who, defying the laws of nature, dares to create life from death has left no reader unmoved. In the last two centuries few novels have been reinterpreted as many times as *Frankenstein* to the point where it has become an icon of popular culture. But Shelley’s novel is much more than a mere horror story: the many cultural references within, its

1 Shelley 2012, 167.

2 *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* appeared in three editions with the approval of the author: 1. A three-volume first edition, published anonymously in 1818, with a preface written by Percy B. Shelley (*Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus*, 3 vols. London: printed for Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor, & Jones, 1818); 2. A second edition in two volumes, signed by Mary W. Shelley and supervised by William Godwin, who introduced stylistic changes of just over one hundred nouns (*Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus*, 2 vols. London: printed for G. and W. B. Whittaker, 1823); and 3. A third edition in one volume, with review of content and form by the author, a new distribution of chapters, and a preface by Mary Shelley (*Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* London. Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1831. 1 vol. Issued as number 9 in the Bentley’s Standard Novels series; reprinted in 1832, 1836, 1839, 1849). The debate about which edition is best suited for academic analysis has been a long and controversial one, since it is closely related to the discussion over the authorship of the novel, as will be seen later. Some authors have come out in favour of the 1818 edition, such as Anne Mellor 1990–2012 (edition given in the bibliography of this chapter) or James Rieger 1974, while authors like David Ketterer 1979 or Nora Crook 2000 prefer the 1831 version. It is not the intention of this study to enter into this debate, but quotations in this chapter are taken from an 1818 edition, unless otherwise indicated. The differences between the two versions will thus be seen.



narrative richness and depth of philosophical thought have made it one of the best representatives of its period, a moment of history characterized both by the ambition for progress and the fear of achieving it.

One of the most important elements of the novel is the intertextuality that takes place within it. Just like Victor Frankenstein himself, Mary Shelley produced her novel (her “hideous progeny”)<sup>3</sup> from pieces of other texts, quotes from “literary corpses” coming together to give birth to a new creation. Milton, Goethe, Dante, and her own father, William Godwin, are just some of the authors evoked. The intertextuality with the Greco-Roman world, though, deserves special mention. As the daughter of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary was exposed to literature and the classics from childhood. Her father gave her access to his personal library, where she read Tacitus, Virgil, and Ovid, although it was not until she met Percy B. Shelley that she became interested in learning Latin and ancient Greek.<sup>4</sup> Mary, then, showed from an early age intellectual concerns which differentiated her from other women of her era.<sup>5</sup>

Among the various elements of the classical world that Shelley recovers for her novel, one particular myth stands out, that of Prometheus, who is mentioned in the subtitle of the work. In mythology the figure of Prometheus appears as the bearer of fire (*pyrophoros*) and as the creator of man (*plasticator*), and in both cases the Titan is the benefactor of man, his creation.<sup>6</sup> As such, the Titan had a strong symbolic meaning in the nineteenth century, representing philanthropy, rebellion against the oppressor, and the struggle for social justice demanded by the labour movement; it was a subversive and transgressive image that fascinated the Romantic writers, who rebelled against rationalism and earlier aesthetic movements.

The first contact that Mary Shelley had with this myth was most likely through the volume *The Pantheon*, a book of Greek mythology for children written by William Godwin himself:

3 Mary Shelley defined her work in this way in the 1831 preface (Shelley 2012, 169).

4 Wallace 2011 and Hurst 2006.

5 In the nineteenth century, the classics were seen as exclusively male studies that kept women from the nineteenth-century ideal of the “angel in the house” (Prins, 1999; Hurst, 2006).

6 Several classical authors developed the myth and passed on their different versions: from Hesiod, who mentions both in the *Theogony* 507–616 and *Works and Days* 42–105, to Lucian’s *Prometheus on Caucasus*, via the interpretations of Plato (*Protagoras*, 320C–323A), a brief reference in Aristophanes (*Av.*, 1494–1552), Hyginus (Fable 142) and Ovid (*Met.* 1.82–8), among others. For a detailed analysis of the textual transmission of this myth, see Kerényi 1997, Duchemin 1974 and García Gual 2009, among others.

Prometheus, who surpassed the whole universe in mechanical skill and contrivance, formed a man of clay of such exquisite workmanship, that he wanted nothing but a living soul to cause him to be acknowledged the paragon of creation: Minerva, the Goddess of arts, beheld the performance of Prometheus with approbation, and offered him any assistance in her power to complete his work: she conducted him to Heaven, where he watched his opportunity to carry off at the tip of his wand a portion of celestial fire, from the chariot of the sun: with this he animated his image: and the man of Prometheus immediately moved, and thought, and spoke, and became everything that the fondest wishes of his creator could ask.<sup>7</sup>

Godwin, unlike classical sources, explains the theft of fire as part of Prometheus' plan to give life to man, and not as an episode after the creation.<sup>8</sup> This idea closely links Prometheus' functions as *pyrophoros* and *plasticator* and is most likely also behind the parallels between the Titan and the young Frankenstein developed in Mary Shelley's novel. Beyond this reference, though, one of the key texts behind the spread of this myth in Western literature, especially during the Romantic period, is Aeschylus' tragedy *Prometheus Bound*. This text is also at the heart of Shelley's novel and will be at the heart of this study.

Whether Shelley really knew Aeschylus' work before writing her novel has been the subject of much discussion. Her personal writings are not very revealing in this respect. On 13 July, 1817 Shelley records in her diary her and her husband's reading of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, during which Percy translated the tragedy and Mary wrote it down;<sup>9</sup> although there are more references to the readings that her husband made of the Greek text, there is no further mention of her studying it again. Nor do her letters offer any relevant information,<sup>10</sup> which has led authors like Zimmerman to question whether Mary Shelley did actually write *Frankenstein*, a novel in which the influence of both the myth and the tragedy is evident. While the lack of data is not in itself sufficient to claim that Mary Shelley did not know Aeschylus' work

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7 Godwin 1806, 94–5.

8 The classical sources do not in general provide many details about the process followed by Prometheus to infuse life into his creature. Only Lucian of Samosata and Ovid specify that he does this by mixing earth with water.

9 The editions of Jones 1946 and 1947, Feldman & Scott-Kilvert 1987, and Marshall 1889 have been consulted.

10 The text is mentioned just once, within a letter addressed to Maria Gisborne on 29 December 1820 (Jones 1946, 108).

either directly or indirectly, there was clearly room for debate. Authors like Zimmermann and Lauritsen have argued that *Frankenstein* is clearly the fruit of the imagination of P. B. Shelley, who somehow passed the idea on to his wife.<sup>11</sup> Other authors, such as James Rieger, have highlighted the collaboration of P. B. Shelley, considering him to be a “minor editor or collaborator” in the work. Veeder and Murray, too, analysed the potential contribution of P. B. Shelley to the novel, considering style and content. In contrast to these authors, Charles Robinson concludes, based on an analysis of the writing of Mary and P. B. Shelley in the manuscripts of the novel, that the collaboration of P. B. Shelley was limited to “4000 to 5000 words” out of this “72000 word-novel,” and that therefore “the novel was conceived and mainly written by Mary Shelley, as attested not only by others in their circle (e.g. Byron, Godwin, Claire and Charles Clairmont, Leigh Hunt) but by the nature of the manuscript evidence in the surviving pages of the draft.”<sup>12</sup> Anne K. Mellor also underlines the creative talent of Mary Shelley, concluding that “Percy Shelley’s numerous revisions of Mary’s original text damaged as well as improved it.”<sup>13</sup> In the same vein there is the view of George Levine, who recognizes that while the collaboration of her husband is undeniable, “the central imagination is certainly Mary’s alone.”<sup>14</sup>

Neither is Aeschylus spared in the controversy: the authorship of *Prometheus Bound* has also been questioned by some critics, with discussion focusing on stylistic and language issues in *Prometheus Bound* that differ significantly from Aeschylus’ other tragedies.<sup>15</sup> The first to question the authorship of Aeschylus was Gercke in 1911, although in 1869 Westphal had already pointed out some discrepancies in the metre. Throughout the twentieth century this view was supported by authors such as Schmid and Griffith.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, mention was also made of what is known as “the Zeus problem,” that is, the fact that the image of the violent and unforgiving god who appears in this tragedy does not match the pious representation of him presented by the tragedian in other works. These arguments, however, have been disputed by authors like

11 “He [P. B. Shelley] was more concerned with helping his friends become writers than with claiming credit for his achievements, but art cannot be hidden” (Zimmerman 1998, 583–4); see also Lauritsen 2007.

12 Robinson 2008, 25.

13 Mellor 2012, 206.

14 Levine 1979, 5.

15 On the authenticity of *Prometheus Bound*, see Griffith 1977, Conacher 1980, and García Gual 2009, 94–9.

16 Schmid *Untersuchungen zum “Gefesselten Prometheus,”* 1929; Griffith, 1977.

Herington, who states that since this work is the only survivor of the trilogy of which it may have formed part,<sup>17</sup> one should not jump to conclusions. According to Herington, Aeschylus may have planned an evolution of the character of Zeus over the three works, in the end arriving at an image of the god more akin to his own ideas.

While it is not the purpose of this chapter to enter into the debate on the authorship of these two works, it does remain something that should be taken into account, especially when considering the possible intertextuality they present. However, here we treat *Prometheus Bound* as written by Aeschylus, since it was treated as such in Shelley's time, and *Frankenstein* as written by Mary Shelley. We shall first analyse the reception of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* in the Romantic era, a time of other highly significant influences which, together with Aeschylus' tragedy, also play their part in the dialogue with Mary Shelley's novel. We shall then look at how both *Frankenstein* and *Prometheus Bound* respond to the historical and personal circumstances of the authors, forming part of their creative experience, before next examining the particular reading of *Prometheus Bound* made by Mary Shelley and what is new about her interpretation of the work. In this sense, it is essential to review the complex game of intertextuality that takes place in the novel along with certain aspects of the narrative of *Frankenstein*, which are articulated in the manner of a classical tragedy. Finally, we shall discuss the setting-up of Victor Frankenstein as a tragic hero, modelled on Prometheus. All of these examples will help us to define the process of literary renovation carried out by Mary Shelley on both Aeschylus' tragedy and the myth of Prometheus itself, which are merged into *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*, resulting in a new contemporary myth.

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17 Herington, 1970. The trilogy, which is conventionally known as the *Prometheia*, supposedly consists of three works: *Prometheus Bound*, *Prometheus Unbound* and *Prometheus the Fire-Bearer*. Some scholars mention the existence of a fourth work: *Prometheus the Lighter of Fire*, a satyr play which completed the tetralogy performed at the Dionysian festivals (García Gual 2009, 99). Some authors discuss the order of the works in the trilogy (Welcker and Weil, among others, argue that *Prometheus the Fire-Bearer* possibly preceded *Prometheus Bound*—see García Gual 2009, 102), while others support the possibility that the trilogy was actually a dilogy. For a complete and concise summary of this debate, see García Gual 2009, 99–110, and Lucas de Dios 2008.

### Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* in the Romantic Era

The various literary sources through which the myth of Prometheus has been transmitted have contributed the different elements that make up the history of the challenge and punishment of the Titan. Throughout these variants there is an evolution in the image of Prometheus, showing his sly and cunning side (as described by Hesiod) or his comic side (Aristophanes). However, it was mainly in Aeschylus' version that Prometheus was characterized as the benefactor of Man and the victim of the wrath of Zeus,<sup>18</sup> a view that has resonated deeply in the collective imagination.<sup>19</sup>

As García Gual noted, Prometheus "is essentially a romantic myth, or rather a myth that the Romantics felt with peculiar intensity."<sup>20</sup> And there is no shortage of reasons for this. The myth of Prometheus, the parent of the arts and sciences, soon became a symbol of progress and of the Industrial Revolution that marked the age;<sup>21</sup> and, from another perspective, the myth reinforces the importance of the ego, of individuality,<sup>22</sup> an essential element in the new Romantic poetry, where Aeschylus' text is present in the Titan's "dual role as defiant rebel and creator of humans."<sup>23</sup>

18 García Gual 2009, 171 and Dougherty 2006, 91–115.

19 In the Anglo-Saxon world and the Romantic period, English translations of the tragedy were instrumental in the spread of the work. Before Mary Shelley published her first edition of *Frankenstein* there were two different translations of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, by Morell (*Prometheus in Chains* 1773) and Potter (*Prometheus Bound* 1777).

20 "es, fundamentalmente, un mito romántico, o mejor dicho, un mito que los románticos han sentido con peculiar intensidad" (2009, 173). The reception of Prometheus in European literature has been studied by Trousson in his classic *Le Thème de Prométhée dans la Littérature Européenne* (1964), and in the corresponding chapter in the *Dictionnaire des Mythes Littéraires* (by Trousson, in Brunel 1988, 1146–55). With regard specifically to the myth during the Romantic era, the works of Curran 1986 and Lewis 1992 are important, along with certain chapters in more general studies of myth and tragedy, like the aforementioned García Gual 2009 and Dougherty 2006. On Percy Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* and Aeschylus, see Desset, this volume.

21 "For enlightened Europe, from 1770 to 1830, the figure and form of Prometheus became an *idée fixe*, a key symbol of any progress (...). The figure of Prometheus sacralizes, by its iconic presence, the process of industrialization" (*Brill Dictionary of Religion* 2007, 1517).

22 "[This myth] entails, psychologically, the birth and development of the individual's ego—that is, it strengthens the factor within the psyche that relates and adapts to both inner and outer realities. Prometheus represents the ego" (Knapp 1979, 4).

23 Dougherty 2006, 91.

One of the best examples of the Romantic reworking of Prometheus is the tragedy *Faust* (1773–1832) by a young and rebellious Goethe.<sup>24</sup> Immersed in the tradition of *Sturm und Drang*,<sup>25</sup> in his text Goethe merges the classical and medieval traditions, showing how, beyond their differences, both Faust and Prometheus “represent at once polymaths, creators, rebels, and philanthropists,”<sup>26</sup> challenging their gods in an act of transgression which entails a corresponding punishment. In the same period when he was writing *Faust* (1774), Goethe wrote his poem *Prometheus*, in which the Titan stands up to a god that ignores the suffering of his creatures and condemns them to solitude. His poems were translated into English in 1838 by the transcendentalist author Margaret Fuller, who identified Prometheus as “the type of Pure Reason,”<sup>27</sup> linking him in part to Kantian philosophy (fundamental to Transcendentalism) and showing the extent of the symbolism that Prometheus held for those of this generation. This assertion by Fuller may not, however, be fully understood without taking into account the English tradition regarding the character of Prometheus, and in particular the lecture on Aeschylus’ *Prometheus* delivered in 1825 to the Royal Society of Literature by Samuel T. Coleridge, where Coleridge claimed that the Titan was “the generation of the ‘νοῦς,’ or pure reason in man,”<sup>28</sup> referring to Prometheus as the bearer of knowledge and setting the mythological character up as the quintessential example of leadership.<sup>29</sup>

In the field of fiction itself, the Byronic hero proved also to be essentially Promethean as regards his challenging, transgressive character, as transmitted

24 See Ziolkowski, this volume for further discussion.

25 “The adoption of Faust as a *Sturm und Drang* symbol coincides with the adoption by these writers of Prometheus (Trousson 1976, 234; 238). As shall become evident, the radical values represented by the figures Faust and Prometheus are nearly interchangeable” (Wutrich 1995, 106).

26 Wutrich 1995, 141. For a detailed discussion on links between the characters of Prometheus and Faust, see Wutrich 1995. Trousson 2001, 400, meanwhile, questions the similarities between the two characters. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that in English literature the myth of Faust has a history prior to Goethe’s work in *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe.

27 This point was made in the Greek mythology seminars organized at the school of Elizabeth Palmer Peabody (González-Rivas Fernández 2013, 411).

28 “On the Prometheus of Aeschylus,” a lecture given to the Royal Society of England (18 May 1825). URL: <http://ia700404.us.archive.org/22/items/OnThePrometheusOfAeschylus/prometheus.html>.

29 See González-Rivas Fernández 2013; Lehman 1922, 639–61.

in Aeschylus' text.<sup>30</sup> In a letter to Mr. Murray (Letter 299, 12 October 1817), Byron admits: "Of the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus I was passionately fond as a boy (...). The *Prometheus*, if not exactly in my plan, has always been so much in my head, that I can easily conceive its influence over all or anything that I have written."<sup>31</sup> And indeed his influence is felt not only in works like *Ode to Prometheus*, written in the same month of July 1816, as *Frankenstein* was beginning to take shape, but also in characters like the tormented Manfred (*Manfred*, 1816–1817).

Finally, Percy B. Shelley's poem *Prometheus Unbound* (1820) requires a special mention.<sup>32</sup> Contrary to what the title might lead us to believe, Shelley did not intend to rewrite Aeschylus' lost tragedy: as he says in his preface, his goal is to create an alternate ending to the Greek tragedy, imagining the victory of the Titan, without this implying a previous reconciliation with Jupiter ("the Oppressor of mankind," P. B. Shelley), an outcome that seemed "unconvincing" to Shelley.<sup>33</sup> His poem, therefore, is not only a romantic interpretation of the myth of Prometheus<sup>34</sup> but a critical reading of Aeschylus, from whom he explicitly distances himself. In its verses, Shelley empowers man, making him responsible for his fate, and consequently his freedom.<sup>35</sup> As Small points out, this coincides in part with his wife's version: "*Frankenstein* and *Prometheus Unbound* are alternative ways of telling the same story, alternative life-histories of the same metaphor;"<sup>36</sup> it was not for nothing that Aeschylus' tragedy was a text common to the couple.<sup>37</sup> However, as discussed in this chapter, Mary's view was to be much less optimistic than her husband's.

It is clear that Romantic writers idealized Prometheus, who had become a hero for a social cause. But not everything about Prometheus was positive. As a Titan,<sup>38</sup> his place in the world is by definition a doubtful one: Prometheus is

30 See Wutrich 1995, chapter 3 "Prometheus the Rebel."

31 Byron, Moore 1833, 58.

32 On P. B. Shelley's updating of Aeschylus' tragedy, see Al-Hasn and Neimneh 2012 and Desset, this volume.

33 P. B. Shelley 1994, 17.

34 On the symbolic implications and socio-political context in which P. B. Shelley wrote his poem, see De Lorenzo 2010.

35 "Shelley reconceptualizes the role of mankind in the Myth, emphasizing that it was not Jupiter who intended to thwart mankind, but that man was his own enslaver and liberator" (Dougherty 2006, 103).

36 Small 1973, 240.

37 The text is even present at times in their love letters (Wallace 2011, 411).

38 It should be noted that Aeschylus changed the genealogy of Prometheus, who is not described as the son of Iapetus, but as himself a Titan, and therefore the son of Uranus

an outsider, an intruder.<sup>39</sup> The fire that he carries to man, symbol of progress and origin of the arts and sciences, provides comfort from the cold and heats food, but also brings with it destruction: it destroys forests and burns entire villages, as happened in wars.<sup>40</sup> Inevitably, this calls into question the charitable and philanthropic work of Prometheus, and as Vandvik notes, it is hard to believe that this relationship between fire and war went unnoticed by the author (Aeschylus or not), who was, as a fifth-century Athenian, an experienced soldier. As Vandvik notes, assuming Aeschylean authorship:

Aeschylus could scarcely have presented the Titan as philanthropist, without any reserve, immediately after the great war (...). If the Titan really had been the great benefactor, Aeschylus would have played out the supreme god against one who was not a deity at all at the time of the conflict (...). Nobody has asked for the reason why the establisher of the Olympian rule and the inventor of all τέχναι, why the great benefactor of the gods and the savior of mankind (....) was degraded to the minor deity whom the Athenians know from their city. Two answers may be given: Prometheus credits himself with merits which do not belong to him. He boasts of benefits which are of a dubious quality. The two answers do not (...) exclude each other. They are both necessary for the solution of this special problem as of the main problem itself.<sup>41</sup>

Some Romantics, like Thoreau, saw Aeschylus as the soldier who fought against the oppressor for freedom,<sup>42</sup> but they perhaps overlooked the ambivalence of Prometheus, which is clear in the tragedy.<sup>43</sup> Mary Shelley, however, made this ambiguity the centre of her novel, as will be seen in the course of this chapter.

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(García Gual 2009, 114). This reinforces the tyrannical image of Zeus, who punishes those who were his own allies.

39 "Neither human being nor god, Prometheus acts as an outsider, to whom either domain is available" (*Brill Dictionary of Religion* 2007, 1515).

40 On the symbolism of fire, see Bachelard 1973.

41 Vandvik 1943, 22.

42 González-Rivas Fernández 2013.

43 In his study of Prometheus, Lewis 1992 shows how the ambiguity of the Titan was a constant from antiquity to the Romantic era.



### *Frankenstein and Prometheus Bound: Personal Experience in Literature*

Both *Prometheus Bound* and *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* are, first of all, true reflections of the times in which their authors lived, and their personal circumstances. On one hand, Aeschylus' tragedy echoes the political and social system of tyranny in antiquity,<sup>44</sup> with a certain criticism of that system which can be seen in the pejorative tone in which the author uses the term *tyrannos* in the play (compare *basileus*, which he uses in other tragedies).<sup>45</sup> It is known that Aeschylus was proud to have fought in the war for his people's freedom from a tyrant, the Persian Xerxes. However, Aeschylus' opposition to tyranny should not be taken out of context, since the concept of "tyranny" in ancient Greece had different connotations from today, and although Aeschylus does use a pejorative term, it may not have been considered pejorative at the time.<sup>46</sup> Mary Shelley, meanwhile, witnessed the consequences of the Reign of Terror in France,<sup>47</sup> as well as

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- 44 See García Gual 2009, Adrados 2000, and Miralles 1968. According to Adrados 2000: xiv, Aeschylus "nunca olvidó la tiranía, que personajes como el rey Jerjes y el tirano de Siracusa, Hierón, le recordaron. Están en el trasfondo de personajes que, por benéficos que hayan sido en un momento, se han constituido en tiranos sin respecto a los dioses ni al pueblo: un Eteocles, un Agamenón" ("never forgot the tyranny of which characters like King Xerxes and the tyrant of Syracuse, Hiero, reminded him. They are in the background of characters who, however beneficent they may have been in one moment, became tyrants with no respect to the gods or the people: an Eteocles, an Agamemnon"). Nonetheless, it should be also noted that, as Duncan asserts, "tragedy was ideologically flexible, able to fit into a range of political contexts" (Duncan 2015, 2) and "its complexity enabled (and continues to enable) multiple interpretations" (Duncan 2015, 14). Finally, the possibility that Aeschylus was in Sicily when he wrote *Prometheus Bound* is a circumstance that should not be overlooked either (with regard to Aeschylus' stay in Sicily, see Duncan 2015, 3–7 and Smith, this volume).
- 45 García Gual 2009, 115. A concise and updated summary of the diachronic evolution of the term *tyrannos* in Ancient Greece can be found in Duncan 2015, 15–6 nos. 3 and 4. As far as Aeschylus is concerned, the use of one term or another is not devoid of controversy: notice that, ironically, the paradigmatic tyrant represented in Aeschylus, Xerxes in *Persians*, is never called tyrant, despite the fact that he represents the "overly-aggressive and imperialist leader" and in contrast with Darius, a king who is reliable and just, and who stands for "a fine model for a hegemonic leader of a volunteer league, like the Athenians and the Delian League" (Kennedy 2013, 70).
- 46 García Gual 2009, 115. The term *tyrannos* probably acquired its negative connotations between the fifth and the fourth century BCE; see Duncan 2015, 3, 15–6.
- 47 With regard to the representation of the French Revolution in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, see Baldick 1987.

the social revolutions of her time, but there are a number of biographical circumstances that also had a key influence on her novel, notably related to her experience of motherhood. Since the start of her relationship with P. B. Shelley, Mary became pregnant five times, but only one of her children survived, and her life was also marked by the absence of her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, who died while giving birth to her. Inevitably, maternity and death were closely linked in the mind of the author, who shares with Victor Frankenstein his desire to create life from death.<sup>48</sup> It is also no surprise that her imagination gave birth to both the character of Victor and that of the monster, who, like Adam and Mary Shelley herself, was motherless.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, Victor Frankenstein's very rejection of his creation has been interpreted as a representation of post-natal depression.<sup>50</sup> In her life, therefore, Mary was the frustrated mother, but in her imagination she is the mother who does not give up; as Hustis says, Mary Shelley set out to prove that a patriarchal society that dispenses with the figure of woman and mother was doomed to failure.<sup>51</sup>

### Intertextuality in *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*

Some authors have viewed the novel *Frankenstein* primarily as a development of the theme of Prometheus *plasticator*, thus focusing on the act of creation that Victor Frankenstein carries out, but the truth is that Shelley also reworks the image of Prometheus *pyrophoros*, playing with the dual role of the Titan. This coincides with the way the myth is read by other Romantic writers, who emphasize the element of transgression that is present in both episodes and in Aeschylus' text. However, the tragedy of *Prometheus Bound* is not the only one

48 "I thought, that if I could bestow animation upon lifeless matter, I might in process of time renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption," claims Frankenstein (M. Shelley 2012, 33). All further quotations are drawn from Haunter's edition of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* 2012. References will only include the page number.

49 Gilbert and Gubar 2000, 227–8. This motherless condition can be even applied to Athena, goddess of wisdom and arts, who was also directly involved in the myth of Prometheus (as Lucian shows in his *Prometheus*, Plato in his *Protagoras*, or even Godwin's own version of the myth).

50 Johnson 1992, Moers 1980, 93, Rubinstein 1976, and others have examined in detail the connection between death and maternity in Shelley's novel.

51 Hustis 2003. Some feminist interpretations have pointed out that one of the ideas conveyed in Shelley's novel is men's "envy" of the creative potential of women and their reproductive cycle, described by Baldick 1987, 32 as "Victor's male womb-envy."

present in *Frankenstein*; in the novel many other texts converge, making up a complex web of intertextuality that in the end contributes to the revisitation of Aeschylus' tragedy.

Above, I discussed different interpretations by Romantic writers of the myth of Prometheus and Aeschylus' tragedy. Shelley knew these and possibly had them in mind while she was writing her novel, but there are many other literary references. Burton R. Pollin points out the importance for Mary Shelley of other modern sources, such as the works of her father (*Things As They are, or the Adventures of Caleb Williams*, 1794; *St. Leon*, 1799; *Fleetwood*, 1805), and philosophical texts such as *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) by John Locke, Condillac's *Treatise on Sensations* (1754), or Diderot's *Lettre sur les Aveugles* (1749).<sup>52</sup> But in this intertextuality with *Frankenstein*, two works in particular stand out, especially in their influence on the narrative structure of the novel: *Paradise Lost* (1660–1674) by John Milton, and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) by Samuel T. Coleridge.

*Paradise Lost* is present in the very quotation that begins the 1818 edition of *Frankenstein*, where an angry Adam complains to the God that created him independently of his own will. In *Frankenstein*, intertextuality with *Paradise Lost* goes back to the Book of Genesis, in addition to activating a complex interplay between characters: as pointed out by Gilbert and Gubar, Victor and the monster are “at one time or another like God (Victor as creator, the monster as his creator’s “Master”), like Adam (Victor as innocent child, the monster as a primordial “creature”) and like Satan (Victor as tormented overreacher, the monster as vengeful fiend).”<sup>53</sup> *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, meanwhile, is an important source for key elements in the novel, such as the Arctic landscape (a desert of ice, which in *Frankenstein* creates a significant contrast to the fire represented by Prometheus), the guilt motive, eternal escape, and transgression.

Literary sources apart, in *Frankenstein* there converge a variety of mythologies present either directly or indirectly, whether from the Jewish, classical, or Christian traditions. From non-Biblical Jewish tradition and occult literature comes the legend of Golem, a creature of clay which Judah Loew breathed life into so that it could serve man. The rabbi is thus a clear antecedent of Victor Frankenstein, as noted by authors such as Rowen and Davidson. The classical tradition, in turn, provides Shelley with various pagan myths. The principal one, Prometheus, comes from Aeschylus' text, but it also contains elements

52 Pollin 1965. There may also be some influence from writers like Rousseau (the monster as a representation of the “noble savage”) or even from Edmund Burke and his theory of the sublime; see Beatriz González 2007.

53 Gilbert and Gubar 2000, 230.

from other classical sources. Moreover, the possible influence of other tragedies brings in myths like Medea, Oedipus, or Orestes, as will be seen in due course. By association with Prometheus as the creator of man, the myth of Pygmalion also appears: in connection with this, Pollin specifically mentions the possible influence of the play by Mme de Genlis *Pygmalion et Galatée; ou La Statue animée depuis vingt-quatre heures*, which Mary Shelley read in the volume *Nouveaux Contes Moraux et Nouvelles Historiques* (Paris 1802–1803). As Pollin suggests, Mme de Genlis' text could have reminded Shelley of the myth of Pygmalion in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.<sup>54</sup> This latter work also seems to have been fundamental as regards the myth of Narcissus, another of the key mythological references on which underpin Mary Shelley's novel:<sup>55</sup> the monster that inspires such rejection ends up simply as an inverted reflection of the young man who falls in love with himself on seeing his image in a pond. Finally, some scholars have also seen in the search for a mate for the monster the presence of Aristophanes' myth of love, as narrated in Plato's *Symposium*.<sup>56</sup>

The Biblical tradition is to be found between the Jewish and the classical. On one hand, Genesis, where the creation of Adam "from the dust of the earth" is recounted (Genesis 2:7), finds a parallel with the legend of Golem, while the character Pandora is recalled in the figure of Eve, the female creation who, tempted by curiosity, brings evil to men—and who, in *Frankenstein*, is represented by the monster. Judeo-Christian literature offers the myth of the Wandering Jew, who is doomed to wander the world until the second Parousia to atone for insulting Jesus on the cross. This myth appears not only in the figure of Victor Frankenstein, who is subjected to eternal persecution, but also has certain parallels with the character of Io in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, the young woman turned into a cow who is doomed to wander the world while being bitten by a horsefly.<sup>57</sup>

Special mention should be made of the identification of Prometheus with Christ, which has also been favoured in certain Christian texts. Christianity condemned Prometheus for his rebellion, but also gave new impetus to the version of Prometheus as creator, especially as a result of a misinterpretation of two texts by Tertullian, which led to the identification of Prometheus with God the Creator.<sup>58</sup> The punishment to which both are subjected (crucifixion, in the case of Christ, and being chained to a rock, in that of Prometheus) also

54 Pollin 1965, 102.

55 See Ballesteros 1998, 118–9 and González-Rivas Fernández 2006, 31–2.

56 See Veeder 1986; Fleck 1967; and Robinson 2008.

57 Zimmerman 1998, 227.

58 Tert. *Apol.* XVIII and Tert. *Marc.* I, 1, 4. See Frenzel 1976, 392.

reinforces the comparison. As Frenzel states, what Tertullian intended was to deny the divinity of Prometheus, and not to equate him with Christ, as scientific literature did.<sup>59</sup> Parallels were, however, almost inevitable.

As we can see, it is difficult at times to distinguish Aeschylus' tragedy in the whole network of texts, authors, and characters woven into Mary Shelley's novel. The myth of Prometheus and in particular Aeschylus' interpretation is syncretized with other readings and thus diluted. Firstly, the image of Prometheus the rebel merges with that of Faust as well as with Adam and Satan, thereby combining Goethe's tragedy and Milton's epic poem. Aeschylus' text, on the other hand, is coloured by other versions of the myth found in classical authors (Ovid, Lucian), as well as by other myths (Pygmalion), which in turn have been transmitted in different ways in modern times (Ovid, via Mme de Genlis). It is possibly through association, then, that myths like that of Golem arise, and Victor, a follower of alchemists like Paracelsus and Agrippa, at one time becomes the new rabbi who dares to create life, and at another the Wandering Jew who offended the Son of God.<sup>60</sup> Shelley cannot, then, be free of post-Aeschylus interpretations of the myth of Prometheus, such as linking the Titan with Christ, or the modern readings of her contemporaries and friends (Lord Byron, P. B. Shelley). In short, Shelley's approach to Aeschylus' text cannot but be from within this literary context in which all these works are activated simultaneously, in a process similar to that evoked by Borges in his famous essay "Kafka and His Precursors," a text that accurately reflects the complex literary relationships that can only be viewed from a comparative perspective. In this essay, the Argentinian writer lists the various authors who seem to be heard behind the text of the Czech writer:

If I'm not mistaken, the heterogeneous pieces I have enumerated resemble Kafka; they do not all resemble each other. This last fact is the most significant. In each of these texts there is Kafka's idiosyncrasy to a greater or lesser degree, but if Kafka had not written it, we would not perceive it; that is, it would not exist.<sup>61</sup>

59 Frenzel 1976, 392. According to the *Brill Dictionary of Religion* 2007, 1517, Thomas Hobbes was one of those authors who supported the identification between Christ and Prometheus.

60 The myth of the Wandering Jew also is a common source shared with Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

61 "Si no me equivoco, las heterogéneas piezas que he enumerado se parecen a Kafka; si no me equivoco, no todas se parecen entre sí. Este último hecho es el más significativo. En cada uno de esos textos está la idiosincrasia de Kafka, en grado mayor o menor, pero si Kafka no hubiera escrito, no la percibiríamos; vale decir, no existiría" (1989, 88–90).

This same process begins again in *Frankenstein*, a novel that brings together Aeschylus, Milton, Coleridge, Ovid, and many other authors and myths, thereby enabling a literary universe which would perhaps never have existed had it not been for Mary Shelley.

There can be no doubt that *Frankenstein*, is, to use Genette's terminology, a hypertext.<sup>62</sup> that is, a conglomerate of hypotexts without which this literary work would not have come into existence. In this context, Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* appears first as a paratext, that is, as a subtitle, which already announces its relevance to the work. Mary Shelley's interpretation of the work is thus an example of metatextuality. As we shall see later, it is through this reading that Shelley converts Aeschylus' tragedy into a novel, showcasing a generic transformation that can be classified as architextuality.

### *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus as a Greek Tragedy*

All the myths and characters that converge in *Frankenstein* have one common element: transgression. This is a key subject in Greek tragedy that was very much emphasized during the Romantic period, fitting in well with the spirit of freedom of the time and the exploration of the irrational world present in the Gothic story. As in Greek tragedy, in Mary Shelley's novel this transgression arises from Man's act of arrogance with regard to the gods. Shelley thus interprets Greek tragedy in a Romantic key, as pointed out by a number of authors.<sup>63</sup> This can be seen in the structure of the plot, in the tragic irony, and in certain narrative parallels. All these elements are also part of Mary Shelley's revisitation of Aeschylus' work.

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62 Genette 1997, 7 defines hypertext as "any text derived from an earlier text by simple processing (hereinafter say without further processing) or indirect transformation, say imitation."

63 González-Rivas Fernández 2006, 323–4; Zimmerman 1998, 238: "The conclusion of the tale evokes an atmosphere of Greek tragedy and the final sentence is moving enough to have actually come from a play;" Shea 2001, 41: "The narrative structure presents a Greek tragedy of fatality, complete with Walton as the chorus and Victor as the great man who falls by means of forces too powerful to withstand; Victor himself blames fate for his downfall, believing that 'Destiny was too potent, and her immutable laws had decreed my utter and terrible destruction';" Zajko 2007: "In laying claim to a Promethean aspect to her story, Shelley situates it within a tradition that encompasses Greek tragedy and opens up a space for comparing her novelistic version with the theatrical one."

The act of transgression is often concretized in man's desire to be the equal of the gods, either through knowledge (Prometheus, Genesis) or by setting himself up as the creator of life (Frankenstein, Prometheus, Golem). But challenging the gods inevitably brings punishment: Prometheus will be put in chains, the Jewish city will be destroyed, Adam and Eve will be expelled from Paradise, and Dr. Frankenstein will be persecuted until his death. Both myth and literary text, therefore, follow the same sequence of events that was established in Greek tragedy: man commits an act of arrogance (ὑβρις), at which the gods inflict on him a moral blindness (ἄτη) that prevents him from being aware of his mistake, and then the corresponding νέμεσις, or punishment, which is designed to lead him back within the accepted limits.<sup>64</sup> In Greek thought, the idea of eternal punishment as suffered by mythical characters like Sisyphus, Tantalus, or even Prometheus himself, is also accepted.<sup>65</sup> Mary Shelley also echoes this concept in her novel, applying a kind of eternal punishment to Dr. Victor Frankenstein: "Some destiny of the most horrible kind hangs over me, and I must live to fulfil it" (130).

In this process of transgression and punishment, tragic irony becomes a key element to enhance the dramatic action and the fall of the hero. As Vandvik notes, the presence of tragic irony in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* has not been developed in great detail, and yet it may be found in the double meaning of certain words and in the very fact that what was going to bring man freedom (fire, knowledge) is what ultimately leads him to his restraint.<sup>66</sup> In *Frankenstein*, irony also helps to intensify the tragic nature of the action from the beginning: Frankenstein wanted to create a beautiful being, "in his image and likeness," and yet the result of the experiment is a monster. One of the scenes filled with the most tragic irony, though, is when the monster threatens Victor when he refuses to build him a companion, as he had promised: "Remember, I shall be with you on your wedding-night" (121). Victor thinks that the punishment of the monster will fall on him, and does not suspect what happens in reality: the monster's revenge will take the lives of his loved ones, thus condemning him to the same loneliness experienced by his creation.

It is precisely in this use of tragic irony that Mary Shelley's novel suggests interesting thematic parallels with other Greek tragedies, such as Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, or *Medea* and *Orestes*, both by Euripides.

64 As far as this tragic sequence in Aeschylus' works is concerned, see Storey and Allan 2005, 105–8.

65 As discussed by Allen 2000 and Lloyd-Jones 1973.

66 Vandvik 1943, 74.

Like Oedipus, Victor Frankenstein admits having been “blind” to the intentions of the monster,<sup>67</sup> and he only realizes the truth in a painful process of *anagnorisis* involving the death of a beloved wife, Jocasta and Elizabeth respectively.<sup>68</sup> As the indirect murderer of his loved ones, and especially Elizabeth, Victor is also Orestes, pursued by the monster, the embodiment of the Furies. This identification is reinforced when we consider the identification that develops in the novel between Elizabeth and Victor’s mother, which makes Victor a matricide. This also harkens back to Aeschylus’ *Eumenides*, thereby returning to the use of tragic irony found in both Greek tragedy and Mary Shelley: “Victor’s incantation echoes the Aeschylean invocation of the avenging spirits of the slain. However, Victor, last of the sons of Frankenstein, is still unable to admit or recognize his own culpability in the deaths of his family, and therefore does not realize that these spirits focus their attentions upon him.”<sup>69</sup> Finally, Victor may be recognized as a new Jason, underestimating the cruelty and revenge of the monster, a new Medea, and subjected to suffering equal to that of his erstwhile victim.<sup>70</sup>

The above strategies reveal how in *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley reinterprets tragedy, one of the most solemn genres in the history of literature, through the novel, a new genus, bourgeois and generally dedicated to more everyday subject matter. There can be little doubt that this is a necessary and appropriate adaptation, and one that responds to the new context of Romanticism, in a period in which the novel is starting to acquire importance. In contrast to

67 “As if possessed of magic powers, the monster had blinded me to his real intentions; and when I thought that I had prepared only my own death, I hastened that of a far dearer victim” (138).

68 Gonzalez-Rivas 2006, 320–3.

69 Shea 2001, 44. Shea refers to this quotation from Frankenstein: “By the sacred earth on which I kneel, by the shades that wander near me, by the deep and eternal grief that I feel, I swear; and by thee, O Night, and the spirits that preside over thee, to pursue the dæmon, who caused this misery, until he or I shall perish in mortal conflict. For this purpose I will preserve my life: to execute this dear revenge, will I again behold the sun, and tread the green herbage of earth, which otherwise should vanish from my eyes for ever.” (145). This quotation, on the other hand, might also point to Aeschylus’ tragedy *Libation Bearers*, as Dr. Rebecca Kennedy suggested to me: see verses 395–9 (“ELEKTRA: When, O when will almighty Zeus lay his hand upon them—ah, ah!—splitting their heads? May the land be given a pledge! I am demanding justice in place of injustice: hear me, Earth, and you honoured gods below!” translation by Sommerstein 2008, 263) and 476–8 (“Now hear this prayer, blessed underworld powers, and send aid willingly to the children, for victory!”, trans. Sommerstein).

70 “One by one, my Friends were snatched away; I was left desolate” (142). See also Gonzalez-Rivas 2006, 322–3.



contemporaries like Goethe, Byron, or her husband P. B. Shelley, Mary Shelley opts for a genre that was also considered especially appropriate for women, viewed as it was as less 'elevated' than poetry. In spite of this, Mary Shelley managed to maintain the typical plot structure of the Greek tragedy, and the same atmosphere of dramatic intensity.

### The Romantic Legacy of Aeschylus: The Characterization of the Tragic Hero

The dramatic structure of the narratives of Aeschylus and Mary Shelley inevitably affects the characters, which stand out as tragic heroes in their respective stories. They share an element that Aristotle claims characterizes the tragic hero, and the factor that triggers the action: namely, *ἁμαρτία* (*hamartia*), the "tragic error." This is, as Aristotle says, the error that the hero makes when he tries to do the right thing at a time when the right thing is not possible. There is not, therefore, any moral guilt in this error, as Lesky points out.<sup>71</sup> This is the case in Aeschylus with the fall of Prometheus, who is subject to eternal punishment for having had pity on man,<sup>72</sup> and also in that of Victor Frankenstein, who is driven by an apparently legitimate desire for knowledge,<sup>73</sup> and is not aware of his own guilt until he comes face to face with his creation.<sup>74</sup> As tragic heroes, though, Victor Frankenstein and Prometheus also share other traits,

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71 Lesky 2001, 58–9.

72 "As soon as he took his seat on his father's throne, he immediately assigned to the various gods their various privileges, and organized his government; but of those wretched creatures, mortals, he took no account at all—on the contrary, he wanted to obliterate the race altogether and create another new one. And no one resisted that plan except me. I had the courage to do it, and rescued mortals from the fate of being shattered and going to Hades. And that you see, is why I am being racked by these torments, agonizing to suffer and piteous to see. I took special pity on mortals, but was not held to merit it myself; instead I have been disciplined in this merciless way, a sight to bring disgrace on Zeus" (Aesch. *PV*. 230–43; trans. Sommerstein).

73 "It was the secrets of heaven and earth that I desired to learn; and whether it was the outward substance of things, or the inner spirit of nature and the mysterious soul of man that occupied me, still my enquiries were directed to the metaphysical, or, in its highest sense, the physical secrets of the world." (Mary Shelley 1968, 296. This passage was added by Mary Shelley in the 1831 edition, in which she highlights the transgressive nature of Victor Frankenstein).

74 "For the first time, also, I felt what the duties of a creator towards his creature were, and that I ought to render him happy before I complained of his wickedness" (69–70).

which again link Aeschylus' text with Shelley's. These traits are characterized in: (a) the rebel hero, (b) the hero of progress, (c) the artist hero, (d) the hero-villain, and (e) the Romantic hero:

a) *The rebel hero*: Like Prometheus, Victor is the product of his time, and both represent the struggle against the tyrant, be it a Persian king or a French monarch.<sup>75</sup> In fiction, the tyrant is presented as a divine authority against which both characters rebel, either by stealing fire or by daring to create life.<sup>76</sup> In their act of rebellion, both Victor and Prometheus want to prove that man does not need God to exist: he is himself sovereign. We know that Aeschylus is the poet of conciliation, and it seems that he pointed to this in his trilogy; Mary Shelley, on the other hand, offers a pessimistic view of this act of rebellion, which ends in death and destruction.

b) *The hero of progress*: With fire, Prometheus brings man the arts, and the progress that allows civilization. As the character Bia (Force) declares to Hephaestus: "For it was your glory, the gleam of fire that makes all skills attainable, that he stole and gave to mortals" (Aesch. *PV*. 7–8, trans. Sommerstein). Later Prometheus explains: "Listen to the miseries of mortals, how infantile they were before I made them intelligent and possessed of understanding. (...) I showed them the hard-to-discern risings and settings of stars. I also invented for them the art of number, supreme among all techniques, and that of combining letters into written words (...). I was the first to bring beasts under the yoke as slaves to the yoke-strap and the pack-saddle (...) and I brought horses to love the rein and pull chariots, making them a luxurious ornament for men of great wealth." (Aesch. *PV*. 441–68; trans. Sommerstein). Victor, too, views his work as a scientific challenge: "So much has been done, exclaimed the soul of Frankenstein—more, far more, will I achieve: treading in the steps already marked, I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation,"<sup>77</sup> reflects the young doctor on hearing the lecture of one of his professors on various scientific advances. "One of the phænomena which had peculiarly attracted my attention was the structure of the human frame, and, indeed, any animal endued with life. Whence, I often asked myself, did the principle of life proceed? It was a bold question, and one

75 See Duncan 2015 and Baldick 1987 as regards the influence of tyranny as a political system in Aeschylus' and the French Revolution in Shelley's works, respectively.

76 In her preface to the 1831 edition, Mary Shelley emphasizes the transgressive nature of the act of Victor Frankenstein with regard to the Christian God: "Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world" (168).

77 Shelley 1968, 308—passage added to the 1831 edition.

which has ever been considered as a mystery" (31), he later confesses. Fire, as the symbol of progress and of the challenge undertaken, is also present in the moment when Frankenstein gives life to the monster in his laboratory, under the "half-extinguished light" of a candle (35). In both texts, then, progress is represented as an act of transgression which will be punished. Finally, fire also represents the downside of progress. This is implicit in the figure of the Titan, as explained above, and is now reworked in *Frankenstein*, and in particular in the character of the monster, who soon realizes that the same fire that brings warmth to De Lacey's home can also be used to destroy it. The same element that creates life can also end it.

c) *The artist hero*: Victor Frankenstein and Prometheus not only bring progress to mankind, but they themselves are makers of men, sculptors of a race that is distinguished by its intelligence. The image of Prometheus *plasticator* has been transmitted mainly by Latin sources (see Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where Prometheus, as with the Christian God, sculpts men from the earth, "that the earth which the son of Iapetus mixed with fresh, running water, and moulded into the form of the all-controlling gods," Ovid. *Met.* 1. 82–3), but in Aeschylus' text Prometheus' discourses on the arts (Aesch. *PV.* 436–71; 476–506) do point to the idea of Prometheus as the first artist, or at least as the father of the arts.<sup>78</sup> This idea was taken up and developed by writers like Goethe,<sup>79</sup> and then authors like P. B. Shelley, who understood that the artist, and in particular the poet, had the social duty to educate the people about the need to rebel to make a better world. Frankenstein also has artistic aspirations when he gives life to his creation, as is reflected in the repetition of aesthetic terms like "beauty" and "beautiful" when he recalls the moment of creation: "His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful" (35), the doctor confesses. But the end result is a monster, and he flees in the face of that representation of the abject:<sup>80</sup> "now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart" (36).

d) *The hero-villain*: The concept of *hamartia* in itself contains great irony, as by hoping to bring about good, the hero causes evil. A priori, the objectives of both Prometheus and Frankenstein seem ambitious and yet legitimate: their rebellion reflects the independence of thought through which progress becomes possible. In both cases, though, the consequences are catastrophic: Prometheus not only has to endure the punishment imposed by Zeus, but also man is punished with Pandora, and by the release of all evils from her jar. Victor

78 Conacher 1980, 82.

79 Mellor 1989, 71; Dougherty 2006, 95–6.

80 In Kristeva's terminology (1982).

Frankenstein, too, is punished and tortured by the monster, but this monster also causes terror and death wherever it lurks, killing other innocent victims. The advent of unexpected evil highlights the aforementioned ambivalence of Prometheus and Frankenstein as tragic heroes, because, despite the fact that they initially appear to be benefactors of mankind, they eventually become its destroyers. Both Aeschylus and Shelley decide to maintain this ambivalence, leaving it to the reader to judge the protagonists.<sup>81</sup> This is yet another aspect common to both works.

e) *The Romantic hero*: As conflictive characters, Prometheus and Victor Frankenstein become perfect Romantic heroes, which also justifies their ambivalence between their role as hero and villain. Zhao defines a Romantic hero as “an idealized, but flawed character whose external attributes include: rebellion, great passion, great talent, lacking of respect for rank and privilege, an unsavory secret past, arrogance, overconfidence or lack of foresight and ultimately a self-destructive manner.”<sup>82</sup> To this Thorslev adds two more key features: sensitivity and Satanism.<sup>83</sup> The Romantic hero in this sense becomes synonymous with the “Byronic hero,” who, as already mentioned, harkens back to Aeschylus and to the rebellion of Prometheus—as well as to other characters, such as Milton’s Satan, Faust, or the Gothic villain, all of them equally present in Shelley’s novel.<sup>84</sup> Like the Titan, the Romantic hero is also an “outsider,” an “outlaw” who does not fit in the world to which he belongs. However, according to Thorslev there is one aspect that distinguishes the Romantic hero (and, in this case, Victor Frankenstein) from Prometheus: namely that the former is essentially individualistic and not “socially concerned” in the Marxist sense, a trait that is an integral part of the Titan’s role as the protector of man.<sup>85</sup> In this case, the character of the individualist is evident in Victor Frankenstein, and this is part of the twist that Shelley gives to the myth of Prometheus to turn him into a romantic hero. There is, finally, one other factor shared by Victor Frankenstein

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81 In the case of Aeschylus’ text, Vandvik 1943 explains: “the reader consequently is torn to and fro between the feelings of sympathy and aversion in the case of the Titan, as also in the case of Zeus.”

82 Zhao 2015, 30.

83 Thorslev 1962, 188.

84 Thorslev 1962, 187. This much can be seen in Mary Shelley’s novel, where intertextuality once again proves to be fundamental to our understanding of the identification between Victor Frankenstein and Prometheus.

85 Thorslev 1968, 188.

and Prometheus in their capacity as Romantic heroes: the loneliness in which both bear their punishment.

Prometheus and Frankenstein are, in short, parallel characters each grappling with a tragic fate, but beyond these similarities Mary Shelley's novel gives a new twist to Aeschylus' tragedy through the use of two resources that are closely interrelated: duplication (1), and inversion (2):

1.) Shelley's novel develops in some depth the motif of the *doppelgänger*, which has been so productive in Gothic literature. In the case of Prometheus, as in the Biblical story of Genesis, the double is present in the very process of creation, where a superior being decides to create mankind "in his image and likeness." Victor Frankenstein also projects himself onto his creation, and the monster subsequently acquires the Promethean features of its creator, as is noted by Spark: "Though at first Frankenstein is himself the Prometheus, the vital fire-endowing protagonist, the Monster, as soon as he is created, takes on the role. His solitary plight—'but am I not alone, miserably one?' he cries—and more especially his revolt against his creator establish his Promethean features. So, the title implies, the Monster is an alternative Frankenstein."<sup>86</sup> Vega supports the same idea, emphasizing the fact that both characters bear fire and in the course of the narrative swap the roles of tyrant (Zeus) and rebel (Prometheus): "The monster will become the master of life and death of its creator having suffered the cruelty of Victor Frankenstein."<sup>87</sup> The monster, therefore, also commits his own act of ὑβρις, and thus becomes another tragic hero. Moreover, like Prometheus,<sup>88</sup> both monster<sup>89</sup> and Victor<sup>90</sup> seek pity for their

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86 Spark 1987, 161.

87 "el monstruo se convertirá en el dueño de la vida y la muerte de su creador después de haber sufrido la crueldad de Victor Frankenstein" (Vega 2002, 146). With regard to this role reversal, Spark 1987 points out the importance of one of the key moments of the novel: the wedding night of Elizabeth and Victor. It is at this point that the functions of the characters' change, and Frankenstein ceases to be persecuted to become the persecutor.

88 "Look, with what indignities I am tormented, to endure these trials for endless years!" (Aesch. *PV*. 93–5, trans. Sommerstein).

89 "How can I move thee? Will no entreaties cause thee to turn a favourable eye upon thy creature, who implores thy goodness and compassion. Believe me, Frankenstein: I was benevolent; my soul glowed with love and humanity: but am I not alone, miserably alone? You, my creator, abhor me" (68).

90 "Oh! Stars, and clouds, and winds, ye are all about to mock me: if ye really pity me, crush sensation and memory; let me become as nought; but if not, depart, depart and leave me in darkness" (104).

suffering, reinforcing the identification between the three characters. The figure of Prometheus, represented by the motif of the double, thus becomes one more link between creator and creation. Finally, as Mellor points out, other characters such as Walton or Clerval also function as mirrors of Frankenstein, and in this sense share his Promethean features.<sup>91</sup>

2.) Mary Shelley's reading of the myth of Prometheus as one of the representations of the motif of duplication (creator-creation) does not, however, stop there: this interpretation implies an inversion of the myth of the Titan, whose desire to project himself onto this new being actually results in a negative reflection of himself, a monstrous representation of the transgression that is taking place. This reversal of the myth, which reinforces the irony of the novel, also takes place on a moral level: unlike Aeschylus' Prometheus, who takes pity on mankind,<sup>92</sup> Victor Frankenstein is unable to show any empathy towards the monster, and therefore avoids his responsibility as a creator. The subtitle of the novel thus becomes an "ironic description of Frankenstein's failure to care for his creature."<sup>93</sup> Moreover, while Prometheus' struggle is altruistic,<sup>94</sup> Victor is completely selfish, and only seeks his own scientific success. As Fleck points out, "love fails in Frankenstein,"<sup>95</sup> and it is this fact that makes Shelley's novel a much more pessimistic interpretation of Aeschylus' text than those of other contemporaries, like her husband Percy B. Shelley.

Finally, it is worth noting that this double resource of duplication and inversion that Mary Shelley weaves from the myth of Prometheus and Aeschylus' text also has its parallel in the myth of Narcissus, who is, as already explained, also present in *Frankenstein*. This is yet another example of the syncretism that is constantly at work in the novel.

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91 Mellor 1989, 76. Robinson 2008, Hustis 2003, and Cantor 1984 are other authors who have also highlighted this division of Prometheus into the figures of creator and creation.

92 "I took special pity on mortals, but was not held to merit it myself; instead I have been disciplined in this merciless way, a sight to bring disgrace on Zeus" (Aesch. *PV*. 241–3; trans. Sommerstein).

93 Bennett 1990. This is also supported by feminist readings of the novel, as mentioned above 302.

94 "I shall say this, not because I have any desire to criticize humans, but to demonstrate the goodwill that inspired my gifts to them" (Aesch. *PV*. 445–6, trans. Sommerstein).

95 Fleck 1967, 253.

### Aeschylus in the Imagination of Mary Shelley: A Literary Updating

In the hands of Mary Shelley, and viewed from the perspective of another moment in history, Aeschylus is transformed and updated, infused with a new mentality. But this is not a straightforward process. What we have seen so far shows us that while Shelley has one eye on Aeschylus, her reading of the tragedian is inevitably infected by the intervention of other factors: a phenomenon of the fusion of myths from various traditions with thematic parallels, facets of the myth not explicitly focused on by Aeschylus (such as that of Prometheus *plasticator*), other literary texts that also shaped Shelley's novel, and a long list of different interpretations of the tragedy of *Prometheus Bound* from earlier generations, including that of her father William Godwin and other contemporary writers. Ultimately, the intertextuality that exists between Aeschylus' tragedy and Shelley's novel does not act in a simple and direct way, but sets off a complex process that activates all the previous impact of the myth and the work in mythology and world literature, an impact to which Shelley cannot be immune.

Shelley does not, though, limit herself to echoing the transmission of Aeschylus' text in earlier literature, but through *Frankenstein* carries out a critical review of this literature and offers a new perspective on the myth and on tragedy in general. As already noted, Shelley's novel questions the success of a patriarchal society that disregards the female figure in its development, but on top of this Frankenstein and his scientific ambition represent a technologically-driven society where humanity disappears and the gods, new and old, fail in their role as protective parents.<sup>96</sup> She also questions the figure of the artist, suggesting, as Dougherty points out: "that the worst thing is for the artist to let his own power as creator outweigh his commitment to humanity."<sup>97</sup> Mary

96 "Whether an allegory on an 'absent creator god' (in Latin *Deus absconditus*), or a literary manifesto of criticism of technology, Prometheus' transformatory and norm-shattering activity in the form of Frankenstein the genius reveals weaknesses in the picture of the responsible, good, creator of Christian salvific thought" (*Brill Dictionary of Religion* 2007, 1517–18).

97 "Mary Shelley's meditation on the creative process reveals the dark underside to the visionary dreams of remaking man that fuelled the imagination of Romantic mythmakers. She challenged those who looked to Prometheus to celebrate and valorize the role of the isolated, creative artist, suggesting that the worst thing is for the artist to let his own power as creator outweigh his commitment to humanity. Whereas Goethe and Byron invoke Prometheus to celebrate the poet's creative powers, Mary Shelley hones in on the problematic potential of the creative spirit itself ... By collapsing the suffering creature

Shelley had already questioned this idealism in the preface she wrote for her husband's verse tragedy, *Prometheus Unbound*: "[P. B.] Shelley believed that mankind had only to will that there should be no evil, and there would be none. It is not my part in these Notes to notice the arguments that have been urged against this opinion, but to mention the fact that he entertained it, and was indeed attached to it with fervent enthusiasm,"<sup>98</sup> says the author, hinting at her scepticism about it. It is this critical attitude regarding Romantic idealism that has led some authors to see the novel *Frankenstein* as "anti-romantic" or "anti-Promethean."<sup>99</sup>

It is not easy to define the type of literary relationship established between Aeschylus' tragedy and Mary Shelley's novel, and neither is it easy to differentiate between myth and tragedy as regards their reception since, as in the case of the Oedipus myth and Sophocles' literary version,<sup>100</sup> they have been so closely linked that it is hardly possible to discuss one without mentioning the other. These difficulties are compounded, finally, by the doubts of some scholars about the real possibility that Shelley did not have in-depth knowledge of *Prometheus Bound* or was even the author of *Frankenstein*. However, as we have seen throughout this chapter, there are narrative and structural elements that link the two works and allow us to create a critical dialogue between them. In this sense, the author seems aware from the beginning of the potential of both Aeschylus' tragedy and the myth of Prometheus itself, beyond any written source. In this case, the direct reading of the texts or their indirect transmission could be considered of equal importance.

During the Romantic era, Prometheus was recreated as a heroic figure and a symbol of freedom, and Aeschylus' text is reinterpreted in this new context in numerous works, which come to complement other earlier interpretations. In this process, Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* becomes a literary convention in itself, that is, a hypotext that, having now become fully integrated into the tradition remains alive in writers' imaginations. Literary conventions, as Claudio Guillén explains, act in an indirect and mediated way, forming a collective

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into the all-powerful creator, she turns the Romantic myth of creativity back upon itself to produce what Paul Cantor calls the 'nightmare of romantic idealism'" (Dougherty 2006, 114).

98 P. B. Shelley 1870, 379.

99 "Frankenstein is anti-Romantic in its rejection of what might be called the 'Promethean' vision of the artist ... and of the goal of perfection." (Leader, *Revisions and Romantic Authorship* 1996, 172. Cited in Hustis 2003, 846). See also Fleck 1967, 253–4.

100 See the study by García Gual 2012.



phenomenon that is shared by an entire generation of writers.<sup>101</sup> This is also a process of which the authors of the nineteenth century were beginning to be aware, as is pointed out by Harry Levin in *Notes on Conventions* (1950), where he claims that poetic conventions were first recognized as such during the Romantic period. In fact, the authors of this period themselves reflect on the implications of any process of intertextuality, and the originality that is present in new interpretations of past works. In this regard, the words of Percy B. Shelley in his preface to *Prometheus Unbound* are of interest:

As to imitation, poetry is a mimetic art. It creates, but it creates by combination and representation. Poetical abstractions are beautiful and new, not because the portions of which they are composed had no previous existence in the mind of man or in Nature, but because the whole produced by their combination has some intelligible and beautiful analogy with those sources of emotion and thought and with the contemporary condition of them ... Poets, not otherwise than philosophers, painters, sculptors and musicians, are, in one sense, the creators, and, in another, the creations, of their age. From this subjection the loftiest do not escape.<sup>102</sup>

Aeschylus' text is diluted in a sea of texts to be found in *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*, a novel that demonstrates that the intertext is not a static element, but a dynamic one that writers read, process and transmit from their own experience. Throughout this intertextuality, the novel *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* has itself become a modern myth and a new literary convention that still today continues to be reworked independently of the original text. From the films of James Whales to Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*, passing through novels like Brian Aldiss' *Frankenstein Unbound*, the story of the young scientist and his monstrous creation has been consistently transmitted and reworked in Western culture. And in all of these reworkings the classics remain there, because although these new readings can never be understood without

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101 "Cuando las influencias se extienden y amalgaman, cuando componen premisas comunes o usos -el aire colectivo que los escritores de cierta época respiran-, entonces se asimilan a lo que a veces denominamos convenciones" (Guillén 1979, 91; "When the influences are extended and amalgamate, when they comprise common premises or uses—the collective air that the writers of a particular period breathe—time, then they assimilate to what we sometimes call conventions").

102 P. B. Shelley 1870, 307.

*Frankenstein*, neither could they be understood without the Titan who was at the origin of it all.<sup>103</sup>

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# An Aeschylean Waterloo: Responding to War from the *Oresteia* to *Vanity Fair*

Barbara Witucki

## Introduction

Thackeray's inclusion of the battle of Waterloo in *Vanity Fair* is not unique in nineteenth century novels.<sup>1</sup> His failure to describe the battle, however, is unusual. Rather than follow the army to the battlefield, Thackeray keeps the novel focused on the families in Brussels and then in England because he "wishes to show how far the chaos caused by war (even when victorious) can spread, the way in which it destroys both individuals and social order, and the way it generates a confusion of discourses."<sup>2</sup> Thus, Thackeray uses a defining moment in British history as mere backdrop. In much the same way, the Trojan War serves as the backdrop to the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus. Here, too, the author focuses on individual and social order and a confusion of discourses. Why, however, make the literary leap from William Makepeace Thackeray in the mid-nineteenth century to the 5th century BCE and Aeschylus as a *comparandum*? Thackeray himself suggests this leap by including three overt references to the *Agamemnon* and a subtle web of textual and visual references to the *Oresteia*.<sup>3</sup> Since it was in the nineteenth century that the general public in Britain and on the continent became familiar with the works of Aeschylus through translations, pictures, and performances,<sup>4</sup> this paper argues that the readers of *Vanity*

1 See Camus 2007, 451–2. Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1869) should be added to those discussed.

2 Camus 2007, 453–4. See also Hammond 2002, 36 who notes that "the action upon which everything turns remains ... absent, off-stage, a mere legend which is open to all sorts of interpretations, as many and varied as his readers."

3 We know that Thackeray was familiar with the tragedies of Aeschylus from his education at Charterhouse School and Trinity College, Cambridge. See Thompson 1899, 11 and Ray 1946, 33 and 43.

4 See Ewans 2005 and Macintosh 2005. French translations and performance of Greek tragedy may also have influenced Thackeray since he frequented Paris from 1829 through the remainder of his life. Particularly significant is his stay there to study art between 1824 and 1837 (Ray, 1946). For French translations and performances of Greek tragedy see the appendix in Nostrand 1935. Dowgan 1982 quotes reviews of editions and translations of Aeschylus from

*Fair* would have easily recognized the references to the *Oresteia*, and that they add a richer and more nuanced understanding of the novel.

### An Aeschylean Waterloo

The narrative of *Vanity Fair* has been described as “a sort of time-machine which, wandering arbitrarily and innocently between one period and another, is never actually rooted anywhere.”<sup>5</sup> This causes some potentially confusing transitions between the narrative time that begins in 1815 and the 1840s when the novel was written. The addition of Aeschylean references complicates the temporal continuum by extending it back to the fifth century BCE as the novel correlates Becky Sharp with Clytemnestra. In addition, Thackeray’s treatment of the Battle of Waterloo mimics Aeschylus’ treatment of the Trojan War in the *Agamemnon*. Aeschylus focuses on Argos and those who did not go to Troy to fight, the women, children, and old men, and how the war affects them. Tellingly, Thackeray invokes Troy as the British soldiers are summoned to march out to battle, “Time out of mind strength and courage have been the theme of bards and romances; and from the story of Troy down to to-day, poetry has always chosen a soldier for a hero.”<sup>6</sup> Once the army has marched out, Thackeray turns to those remaining behind:

The war-chroniclers who write brilliant stories of fight and triumph scarcely tell us of these. These are too mean parts of the pageant: and you don’t hear widows’ cries or mothers’ sobs in the midst of the shouts and jubilation in the great Chorus of Victory. And yet when was the time, that such have not cried out: heartbroken, humble Protestants, unheard in the uproar of the triumph!<sup>7</sup>

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a wide variety of popular British journals from the 1830s and 40s. For example, Article 11 in the *Quarterly Review* Vol. 70 (1842) 315–55 includes reviews and extended discussions of six different editions of individual plays and the complete works of Aeschylus.

5 Hammond 2002, 19.

6 VF 301. All quotations from *Vanity Fair* are taken from the Norton Critical Edition edited by Peter L. Shillingsburg. Note that Thackeray subtitles *Vanity Fair*, “A Novel Without a Hero,” and he eschews poetry for prose, an announcement from the outset that neither heroes nor the heroic mode holds his interest.

7 VF 308–9.



In the *Agamemnon*, one of the greatest trials for the citizens of Argos is a lack of reliable information, which leaves them prey to constant worry. They are dependent on others for news throughout the duration of the war. When she welcomes Agamemnon back, Clytemnestra says:

... From my full heart  
Will I recount my melancholy life  
Thro' the long stay of my lov'd lord at Troy:  
For a weak woman, in her husband's absence,  
Pensive to sit and lonely in her house,  
'Tis dismal, list'ning to each frightfull tale:  
First one alarms her, then another comes  
Charg'd with worse tidings. Had my poor lord here  
Suffer'd as many wounds as common fame  
Reported, like a net he had been pierc'd.<sup>8</sup>

Clytemnestra and the others in Argos have only rumor for news. Consequently, they are in a perpetual state of fear. Similarly, Thackeray describes the scene in Brussels:

Each man asked his neighbor for news; and even great English lords and ladies condescended to speak to persons whom they did not know. The friends of the French went abroad, wild with excitement, and prophecy-ing the triumph of their Emperor.... The prophecies of the French partisans began to pass for facts. "He has cut the army in two," it was said. "He is marching straight on Brussels. He will overpower the English, and be here tonight." "He will overpower the English," shrieked Isidor to his master, "and will be here tonight." The man bounded in and out from the lodgings to the street, always returning with some fresh particulars of disaster.<sup>9</sup>

8 Potter 262–3; *Ag.* 858–68. Though Thackeray had some command of Greek from his education, all translations of Aeschylus are taken from the Potter 1777 translation. This became the standard English translation from the end of the eighteenth through the nineteenth century. Later editions of Potter's translation were published in 1808, 1809, 1819, 1833, 1886, and 1892 (Stoker 1993, 302). References to Potter's translation include page numbers; references to the Greek include line numbers.

9 VF 312.

Thackeray extends the worry and confusion by having the lone survivor of a division under the Prince of Orange return to Brussels and tell his beloved that his regiment and “the whole British army by this time” were overwhelmed by the French.<sup>10</sup> The serving man, Isidor, overhears this account and reports to his master, “It is all over ... Milor Duke is prisoner; the Duke of Brunswick is killed; the British army is in full flight.”<sup>11</sup> The news of the “defeat” spread through Brussels and hastened the exodus of inhabitants. What was merely rumor became reality as it was passed from person to person. Each additional piece of news seemed worse than the last, sowing a sense of panic among those who heard it. Even when survivors who had been thought dead began to return to Brussels, they did nothing to stem the flood of rumor, but rather, “[they] filled the whole town with an idea of the defeat of the allies. The arrival of the French was expected hourly; the panic continued.”<sup>12</sup> A day later, “Rumours of various natures went still from mouth to mouth: one report averred that the Prussians had been utterly defeated; another that it was the English who had been attacked and conquered; a third that the latter had held their ground.”<sup>13</sup> As the battle continues, factual information remains tenuous, and the sense of panic grows. Despite the passage of millennia between the Trojan War and the Battle of Waterloo, and Aeschylus and Thackeray, nothing changed. In tragedy, the speakers each add their own claim for authority;<sup>14</sup> in the novel, the narrator could stand forth and claim authority, but Thackeray does not. He lets the various characters assert their own views.<sup>15</sup>

Thackeray echoes not only Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* in his description of the actions preceding the march to Waterloo, but also the *Persians*, another tragedy focused on those who remain at home while a great battle is fought far away. The tragedy begins with the chorus giving a catalogue of the Persian army as it left Susa. It then describes those remaining behind:

Thus march’d the flower of Persia, whose loved youth  
The world of Asia nourish’d, and with sighs  
Laments their absence; many an anxious look  
Their wives, their parents send, count the slow days,  
And tremble at the long-protracted time.<sup>16</sup>

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10 VF 314–5.

11 VF 315.

12 VF 318.

13 VF 321.

14 Barrett 2002, xv.

15 See Camus 2007, 452–9.

16 Potter 464; *Pers.* 59–64.

Before turning to what is happening in Brussels as the battle is waged, Thackeray, too, gives a catalogue of the army, albeit truncated, that begins, "The sun was just rising as the march began—it was a gallant sight—the band led the column, playing the regimental march—then came the major in command, riding upon Pyramus, his stout charger."<sup>17</sup> Once the army is gone, Thackeray describes the women, "Their hearts were with the column as it marched farther and farther away. Dreadful doubt and anguish—prayers and fears and griefs unspeakable—followed the regiment. It was the women's tribute to the war."<sup>18</sup> There is a further similarity between Aeschylus' *Persians* and *Vanity Fair* in the use of the eagle. Atossa, the Queen, tells the chorus about her dream in which she sees an eagle, "the imperial bird," and a symbol of the Persian army, defenseless against an attack by a hawk.<sup>19</sup> The Persians are, indeed, conquered by the Athenians. Thackeray also uses the eagle as a symbol, of both Napoleon and, in light of *Persians*, his coming defeat, when he describes Napoleon as having come back from Elba "to let loose his eagle from the Gulf San Juan to Notre Dame."<sup>20</sup>

In both the *Agamemnon* and *Vanity Fair*, the outcome of the battle is reported second hand. As is typical in Greek tragedy,<sup>21</sup> the Herald comes to Clytemnestra and announces the defeat of Troy and the incipient return of Agamemnon.<sup>22</sup> He then describes the state of the Argive army as the war progressed, the suffering they endured, and the ultimate defeat of Troy. He suggests that it is time to forget misery and to set up commemorative trophies in the temples.<sup>23</sup> Thackeray, while maintaining a similar second hand approach to the presentation of the events of the battle, takes over the narrative voice from the characters. He serves as the herald. In doing so, he shifts the time frame of the narrative to his own time when he addresses the readers: "All of us have read of what occurred during that interval. The tale is in every Englishman's mouth; and you and I, who were children when the great battle was won and lost, are never tired of hearing and recounting the history of that famous action."<sup>24</sup> He goes on to suggest that the defeated long for an opportunity to avenge the dead and reverse the defeat, and that "if a contest, ending in

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17 VF 301.

18 VF 311.

19 Potter 471–2; *Pers.* 205–10. Though Potter calls the eagle the "imperial bird," the adjective does not appear in the Greek.

20 VF 277.

21 See Stéfanis 1997 and Barrett 2002 for discussions of the convention of the messenger speech in tragedy.

22 Potter 243–4; *Ag.* 503–37.

23 Potter 246–7; *Ag.* 551–82.

24 VF 326.

a victory on their part, should occur, elating them in their turn, and leaving its cursed legacy of hatred and rage behind to us, there [would be] no end to the so-called glory and shame, and to the alternations of successful and unsuccessful murder in which two high-spirited nations might engage.”<sup>25</sup> Thackeray’s narrative interruption reminds the readers that this is a battle that was fought in their past, but that it still colors the present.<sup>26</sup> Hammond explains the significance of this temporal juxtaposition in *Vanity Fair* by showing that while Thackeray was writing and publishing the novel in serial form, the English public was consumed “by debates around the correct way to commemorate war heroes, in particular the ‘Hero of Waterloo’ [and] that Waterloo itself was a subject which, far from seeming historically distant to most of Thackeray’s readers, may have occupied a conspicuous and important place in their sense of their own time.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, by interposing the present into the narrative on Waterloo, Thackeray suggests the commemoration of victory and war heroes just as, more explicitly, the *Agamemnon* had.

Thackeray leaves behind Brussels and Waterloo for two chapters, 33 and 34, but returns in chapter 35 with the words, “The news of the great fights of Quatre Bras and Waterloo reached England at the same time. The Gazette first published the result of the two battles; at which glorious intelligence all England thrilled with triumph and fear.”<sup>28</sup> He continues to describe how the lists of those wounded and killed are published as they become known, leaving families in suspense and fear, much like Clytemnestra, until the next update. The newspaper has replaced the herald and is a reminder of the enormous scope of the grief that war causes. Here, too, Thackeray seems to reference *The Persians* as well as the *Agamemnon*. The Messenger returns to Susa to give an account of the defeat at Salamis to Atossa and the Chorus of Persian Elders. He reports the outcome of the battle and stresses the number of the dead. The Chorus intersperses a comment, “Call to remembrance / How many Persian dames, wedded in vain, / Hath Athens of their nobles husbands widowed.”<sup>29</sup> In a similar vein, speaking of those at home reading the gazettes day after day,

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25 VF 326.

26 The Trojan War is in the distant past for Aeschylus, but the Persian Wars occurred in his lifetime. During the wars, he participated in the battles of Marathon, Salamis and Plataea. See the “Life of Aeschylus” in Page 1972, 331. In his introductory remarks to *Persians*, Potter 1777, 457 says, “Nothing can be conceived more agreeable to a brave and free people, than that which sets before their eyes the ruin of an invading tyrant defeated by their own valour.”

27 Hammond 2002, 22. See also Stevens 1974a.

28 VF 351.

29 Potter 476; *Pers.* 286–9.

Thackeray says, "Each one of [the soldiers] as he struck his enemy wounded horribly some other innocent heart far away."<sup>30</sup>

### Vengeance and Fear

In this interruption at the conclusion of the Battle of Waterloo, Thackeray introduces other themes suggestive of the *Agamemnon*: vengeance, hatred and fear, and an ongoing cycle of murder.<sup>31</sup> As stated earlier, Thackeray makes two overt references to the story of the *Agamemnon* in *Vanity Fair*. In chapter 13 of the novel, he describes the "chronometer which was surmounted by a cheerful brass group of the sacrifice of Iphigenia" on the mantle of Mr. George Osborne Sr.<sup>32</sup> In addition to introducing the character of Iphigenia, the chronometer's "steady and remorseless ticking signals an ongoing, if unsuspected, cycle of aggression and retaliation."<sup>33</sup> Early in the *Agamemnon*, the chorus describes the sacrifice of Iphigenia at Aulis by her father, Agamemnon, in order to appease the goddess and ensure favorable winds for the Greek army to sail to Troy.<sup>34</sup> It is this sacrifice of their daughter that Clytemnestra will claim as one of her justifications for killing Agamemnon. One death serves as revenge for another. Orestes, in turn, kills Clytemnestra in revenge in the *Libation Bearers*. Thus, Aeschylus illustrates the pattern of a reciprocal killing on the individual and family level. Thackeray, however, describes it on the level of states. If the defeated find an opportunity to revenge their loss and are victorious, it will leave a "cursed legacy of hatred and rage ... and [no end] to the alternations of successful and unsuccessful murder in which two high-spirited nations might engage."<sup>35</sup>

Later in *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray invokes the action that follows the return of the army in the *Agamemnon* when he describes the charades enacted at Gaunt House in chapter 51. In the course of the charades, Becky Sharp and her husband

30 VF 352.

31 DiBattista 1980, 834 notes this same theme: "Shame and glory are the values endemic to a classical ethos, and their legacy is a cursed heritage of hatred and rage ... In contemplating the sweeping panorama of historical change and struggle, Thackeray discerns an endlessly repeatable cycle of victimization and revenge."

32 VF 129.

33 DiBattista 1980, 834. Camus 2007, 461 notes that Amelia holding her husband's red belt against herself like a blood stain as he prepares to leave for war "is a picture of the sacrificial victim."

34 Potter 225–8; *Ag.* 176–247.

35 VF 326.

Colonel Rawdon Crawley enact Clytemnestra's murder of Agamemnon upon his return home from Troy. Becky plays the role of Clytemnestra and her husband that of Agamemnon. With the character she is portraying, Becky shares the fact that she too, unbeknownst to her husband, has taken a lover, of a sort, in the form of Lord Steyne, who has made her life infinitely more comfortable both socially and financially. The charade begins with a brief description of the fall of Troy and the return home of Agamemnon. Then, Agamemnon is described as asleep in his chamber:

Ægisthus steals in pale and on tiptoe.... He raises his dagger to strike the sleeper, who turns in his bed, and opens his broad chest as if for the blow. He cannot strike the noble slumbering chieftain. Clytemnestra glides swiftly into the room like an apparition—her arms are bare and white,—her tawny hair floats down her shoulders,—her face is deadly pale,—and her eyes are lighted up with a smile so ghastly, that people quake as they look at her.

...

Scornfully she snatches the dagger out of Ægisthus's hand, and advances to the bed. You see it shining over her head in the glimmer of the lamp, and—and the lamp goes out, with a groan, and all is dark.<sup>36</sup>

Though Becky does not truly kill her husband in the charade, on some level she becomes identified with the vengeful and awful nature of Clytemnestra, and she may be counted as the cause of her husband's death when it does occur. After Colonel Crawley discovered Becky's intrigues with Lord Steyne, he separated from her and took the position of governor of Coventry Island, a non-salubrious place where he died of yellow fever.<sup>37</sup> Lord Steyne, too, echoes the story of the house of Atreus through a family history that hints at some sort of suppressed sexual curse. In speaking of Lord Steyne and his family, Thackeray describes "an Aeschylean brooding over the fall of a great house," and a sense of an "ancestral evil that hangs over Gaunt House."<sup>38</sup>

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36 VF 510.

37 VF 689.

38 DiBattista 1980, 831. Rebecca Kennedy brought to my attention the inclusion of "Gaunt House" as the dysfunctional home of Voldemort's maternal grandfather, Marvolo Gaunt, in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* 2005, and the inclusion of a quote from Aeschylus, the Libation Bearers as an epigraph to *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hollows* 2007. Thus, Rowling, like Thackeray, joins Gaunt House and Aeschylus.

The charades at Gaunt House weave *Vanity Fair* together not only with the *Agamemnon*, but with the entire *Oresteia*. In addition to verbal references to Aeschylean scenes, Thackeray drew illustrations for *Vanity Fair* that also associate the novel with the *Oresteia*. Only by joining text with images does a comprehensive sense of the intricate web of allusion that Thackeray develops emerge.<sup>39</sup> In *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray includes three kinds of illustrations: pictorial capitals, vignettes, and full-page plates.<sup>40</sup> One of the full-page plates shows Becky curtsying following her triumph as Clytemnestra in the charades at Gaunt House. Becky's dress, with its lack of sleeves and the gently falling folds of the top, evokes Greek statues. Her hair is loosely bound up in a Grecian bun. Though the charade scene is over, she still holds the dagger at a somewhat dangerous angle. With the exception of the dagger, the picture is based on curved lines. Secondary characters fill the backdrop in a realistic way (Fig. 12.1).<sup>41</sup>

In the narrative, Lord Steyne says of Becky's performance, "Mrs. Rawdon Crawley was quite killing in the part."<sup>42</sup> Jadwin notes the double entendre and concludes, "The applause and the 'killing' metaphor reveal that the audience finds Becky's fatality entertaining and titillating; their response affirms the culture's tacit acceptance of androicide so long as it develops only in the marginal silence of implication and concludes tastefully, offstage."<sup>43</sup> Greek tragedy does not present violent scenes, such as the murder of Agamemnon, on stage. The action happens off stage and is reported.

In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Clytemnestra describes her killing of Agamemnon, done off stage, in the following way:

To many' a fair speech suited to the times  
 If my words now be found at variance,  
 I shall not blush. For when the heart conceives  
 Thoughts of deep vengeance on a foe, what means  
 T' atchieve the deed more certain, than to wear  
 The form of friendship, and with circling wiles

39 Thackeray as illustrator of many of his own novels and the relationship between text and illustrations has been much discussed. See Levy 1999; Fisher 1995; Kennedy 1994; Canhan 1994; Sweeney 1974; Stevens 1974a and b; and Hannah 1966.

40 Kennedy 1994, 136.

41 Note that although the text says that "her tawny hair floats down her shoulders," Becky is pictured with her hair upswept into a bun. Macintosh 2005, 148 draws attention to the similarity between both the textual description of Becky's triumph and the illustration and a contemporary actress, Helen Faucit.

42 VF 511.

43 Jadwin 1993, 50.

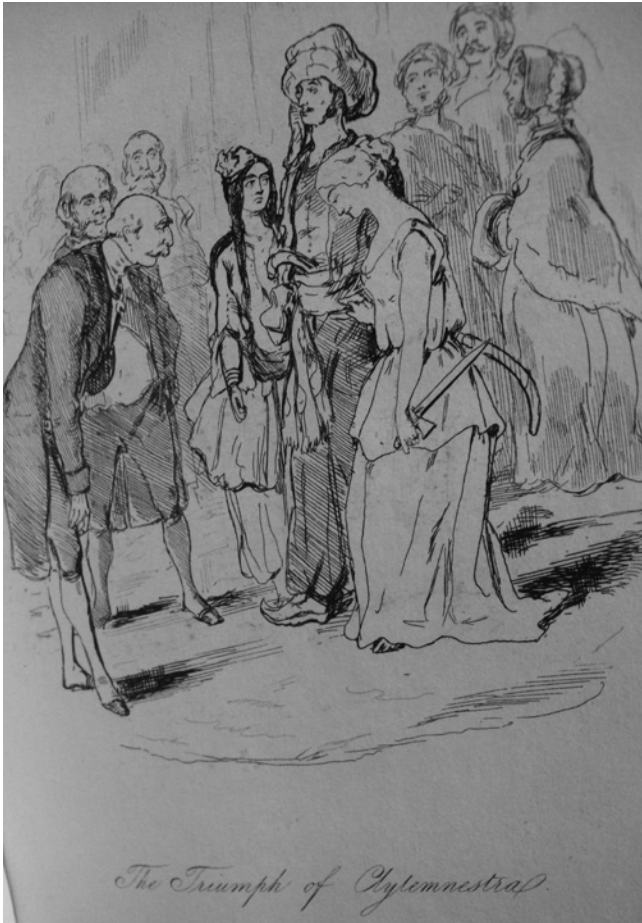


FIGURE 12.1 *Becky as Clytemnestra.*

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Inclose him in th' unsuperable net?  
This was no hasty, rash-conceiv'd design;  
But form'd with deep, meditated thought  
Incens'd with wrongs  
And plan'd it so, for I with pride avow it,  
He had no pow't t' escape, or to resist,  
Entangled in the gorgeous robe, that shone  
Fatally rich.<sup>44</sup>

44 Potter 293; *Ag.* 1372–84.



She admits to deceit through “the form of friendship,” and says that she enclosed Agamemnon in an unconquerable net and entangled him in a gorgeous robe. When Clytemnestra described the rumors that she had been dependent on for news during the war, she said that if Agamemnon had been struck as many times as he had been rumored to have been struck, he would have been pierced like a net.<sup>45</sup> This image of nets and woven material is repeated and varied throughout the tragedy. After Clytemnestra announces that Troy had been captured, even before the herald arrives, the chorus addresses the “supreme of kings, Jove ... That with resistless might / O’er Troy’s proud tow’rs, and destin’d state, / Hast thrown the secret net of fate.”<sup>46</sup> Cassandra, too, calls up the image of a net:

Ha! What is this that I see here before me?  
Is it the net of hell? Or rather her’s,  
Who shares the bed, and plans the murderous deed.  
Let discord, whose insatiable rage  
Pursues this race, howl thro’ the royal rooms  
Against the victim destin’d to destruction.”<sup>47</sup>

Clytemnestra insists Agamemnon walk on tapestries.<sup>48</sup> Woven nets, tapestries, and robes form one of the motifs that appear throughout the *Oresteia* uniting the trilogy into a sort of web of its own through “a system of kindred [images] ... connected to one another by verbal similarity rather than verbal duplication.”<sup>49</sup> Only gradually does their significance become apparent.

Thackeray develops a similar web of kindred images in *Vanity Fair*, though his imagery is both verbal and pictorial. Early in the novel, when Becky, wearing “the form of friendship,” visits Amelia and meets her wealthy, older brother Jos, she thinks, “If Mr. Joseph Sedley is rich and unmarried, why should I not marry him?”<sup>50</sup> The capital “P” at the outset of chapter 4 shows a Becky-like figure sitting on the curve of the letter with a fishing pole and the line dropping down to a fat fish swimming in a stream. In the course of the chapter, Jos visits, and Becky charms him into holding her green silk as she weaves a purse. He sits, “his hands bound in a web of green silk, which she was unwinding.”<sup>51</sup> This

45 Potter 263; *Ag.* 866–8.

46 Potter 234; *Ag.* 357–8.

47 Potter 277; *Ag.* 1114–19.

48 Potter 265; *Ag.* 909.

49 Lebeck 1971, 1. See 63–7 for a discussion of net imagery in the *Agamemnon*.

50 *VF* 17.

51 *VF* 36.



FIGURE 12.2 *Chapter 4, initial letter 'P'.*

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scene is represented in a full-page illustration (Fig. 12.2). The juxtaposition of the single rather short line on the fishing pole with the long skeins of green silk thread suggests that the fishing line lengthens into them—enough to be woven into a purse, or to trap a young man (Fig. 12.3).<sup>52</sup> While the “line” or “thread” is not repeated exactly, it is clearly “associative repetition.”<sup>53</sup>

52 Kennedy 1994, 139–41 analyses the relationship between the two pictures but leaves the interpretation at Jos being “figuratively entangled in [Becky’s] schemes.” Note that Rebecca recalls the scene with the green purse to Jos after her husband, Colonel Crawley, and Amelia’s husband, whom Rebecca has been in the process of seducing, have marched out to Waterloo and their potential deaths, *VF* 307–8.

53 I have borrowed the term from Lebeck 1971, 1.

Jos does indeed become ensnared by Becky, but not until the end of the novel. His entrapment is illustrated by a second, varied presentation of Clytemnestra killing Agamemnon. Becky, long separated from her husband and totally estranged from Lord Steyne, finds herself down on her luck and her finances after a number of years of living in various places on the continent. By chance, she meets Jos at the gaming table in Pumpnickel. This chance meeting leads to Becky following Jos from place to place. Ultimately, Jos finds himself in a "pitiable" state, totally dependent on Becky and yet "dreadfully afraid of [her]."<sup>54</sup> When Dobbin, his brother-in-law, suggests that he break all bonds with Becky, Jos says of her, "You don't know what a terrible woman she is."<sup>55</sup> Thackeray includes a full page plate titled, "Becky's second appearance in the character of Clytemnestra." Though the text makes no mention of Becky overhearing this conversation, in the illustration she stands hidden behind a curtain holding what appears to be a dagger in one hand as she looks out at Jos and Dobbin talking. The portrayal of Becky here is radically different from her earlier portrayal as Clytemnestra. In the earlier drawing (Fig. 12.3), she had been depicted with softly curved lines. Here, the lines used in the drawing are linear and harsh, somewhat like the hard, long lines of the dagger of the earlier picture. Here, she matches the textual description of the earlier scene, "Her tawny hair floats down to her shoulders"<sup>56</sup> (Fig. 12.4).

Three months after the meeting with Dobbin, Jos died. There is no narrative proof of any complicity in his death on Becky's part, but the illustration "provide[s] us with the nightmare vision that makes the inference of Becky's guilt unequivocal."<sup>57</sup> Jos had almost become Becky's surrogate husband and had, in some sense, betrayed her doubly. His first betrayal was running away from her early in the novel, and his second is the possibility of his leaving her now. Thus, he becomes the victim of her vengeance.

Thackeray's use of Guérin's *Clytemnestra* as the inspiration for his portrayal of "Becky's second appearance in the character of Clytemnestra," has long been noted. He reverses the placement of Clytemnestra but maintains the curtain that separates her from the male character as well as the play of light and shadow. In this instance, then, Thackeray makes a double reference to the *Agamemnon*, one that is both literary and artistic. In addition to Guérin's painting, moreover, Thackeray's illustration evokes one of John Flaxman's outline

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54 VF 685.

55 VF 687.

56 VF 510.

57 Macintosh 2005, 150.

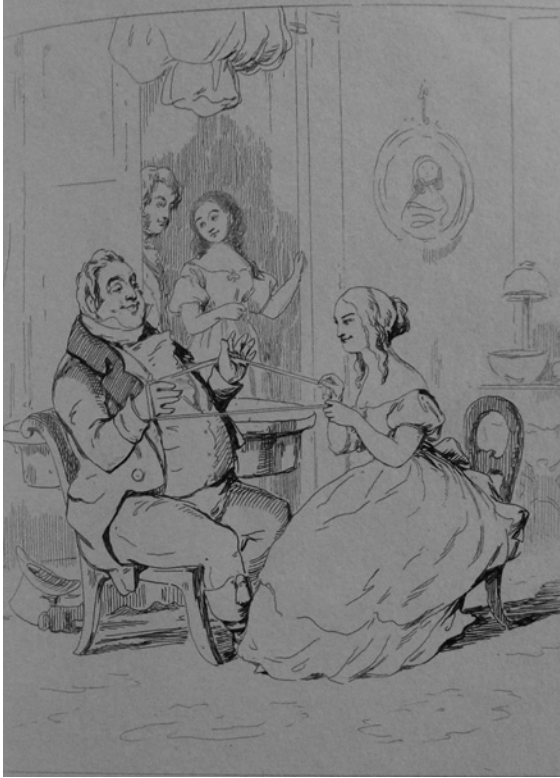


FIGURE 12.3

*Mr. Joseph entangled.*

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illustrations to the *Eumenides*, which adds another layer to the rich tapestry of references.<sup>58</sup>

Flaxman was commissioned to make a series of illustrations for Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* that were engraved and issued in book form in Rome in 1793.<sup>59</sup>

58 For a comprehensive discussion of Thackeray's appropriation and transformation of other paintings in his book illustrations, see Meisel 1983, chapter 16: "The Paradox of the Comedian: Thackeray and Goethe." Meisel describes the visual echoes Thackeray incorporates between the illustrations he completed for *Vanity Fair* and the frontispiece that he drew for *The History of Pendennis* (1848–50). In this, he not only draws upon the well-known visual characteristics of Amelia and Becky, but he also visually alludes to Sir Joshua Reynolds' painting, "Garriick between Tragedy and Comedy." Reynolds' painting, in turn, echoes multiple representations of the Choice of Hercules from the Renaissance on. In a similar manner, Thackeray develops multiple visual references within a single illustration here in *Vanity Fair*. See also Macintosh 2005, 148–50.

59 Symmons 1984, 76–7. Flaxman had illustrations for *Pilgrims Progress* that he displayed at Rome. These seem to have generated the commissions for the more popular classical authors.

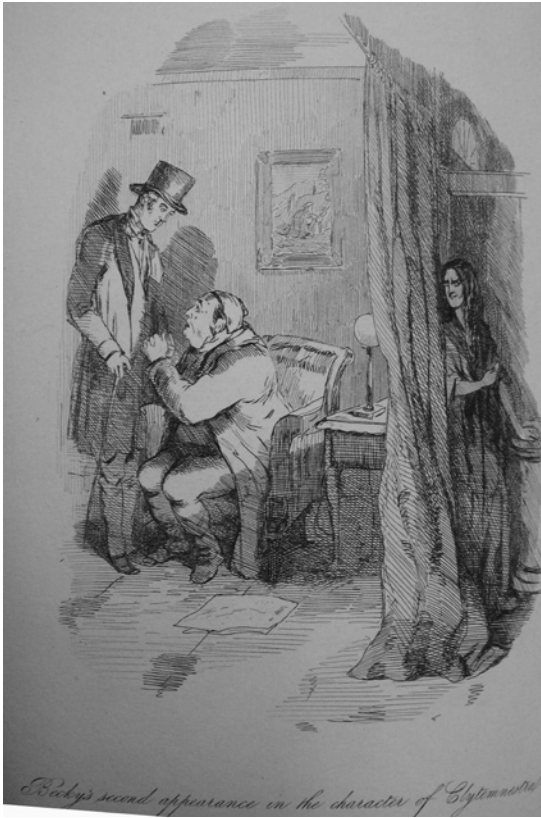


FIGURE 12.4  
*Becky's second appearance in the  
 character of Clytemnestra.*  
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and an English edition was published in 1795.<sup>60</sup> At virtually the same time, the Dowager Countess Spencer commissioned a set of “thirty-one illustrations to the seven tragedies of Aeschylus.”<sup>61</sup> In preparation for this work, Flaxman requested that a copy of Potter’s Aeschylus translations be forwarded to him in Rome. Both the Homer and Aeschylus illustrations made a tremendous impact not only in England but also throughout the continent. The Aeschylus illustrations were published in London (1795), Germany (1802), and Paris (1803),<sup>62</sup> and they became a significant form of dissemination for the tragedies. As engravings, they were mobile and inexpensive compared to sculptures or paintings. Thus, they were purchased and carried from country to country “not only by

60 Constable 1927, 45. These were commissioned by Mrs. Hare Naylor, part of the British expat community in Rome at the time. There were 39 illustrations for the *Iliad* and 34 for the *Odyssey*.

61 Constable 1927, 46.

62 Symmons 1984, 108.

rich collectors, but by students, minor artists and architects or even interested amateurs.”<sup>63</sup> Captions accompany the individual drawings and form a continuous narrative so that the whole is “virtually the first strip cartoon.”<sup>64</sup>

Flaxman developed a new style of art for his illustrations of classical texts. He worked “backwards, from a sophisticated image to the primitive” and sought to simplify complex images to a “rudimentary outline,”<sup>65</sup> hence the name, “outline” illustrations. Generally, Flaxman includes a blank background behind his figures or fills it with “unique rows of horizontal lines.”<sup>66</sup> The outline illustrations were much admired and praised by Goethe, Schiller, and Schlegel, all major influences on Thackeray during the time he spent in Weimar in 1831.<sup>67</sup> In France, where Thackeray settled in 1834 to study art, Flaxman was considered a celebrity, and “throughout the 19th century French painters and sculptors openly acknowledged their debt to Flaxman whose illustrations had provided them with so many new ideas, both in imagery and technique.”<sup>68</sup> Thackeray was one of the many who fell under the spell of Flaxman’s line drawings. Writing to a friend back in England while traveling in Italy in 1835, Thackeray says, “I have seen those rough Lodges of Raphaele, & still do not believe—I am sure Flaxman is much finer for drawing feeling compo & so on.”<sup>69</sup> In reviewing Haydon’s *Lectures on Painting and Design* in 1846, Thackeray quotes, “Flaxman’s designs from the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and Greek tragedians, are his finest works ...”<sup>70</sup>

In *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray seems to move from flattery to imitation. The illustration, “Becky in her second appearance in the character of Clytemnestra,” resembles Flaxman’s illustration of Clytemnestra rousing the Furies at the beginning of the *Eumenides*.<sup>71</sup> Clytemnestra’s ghost is to the right, the folds of her draped clothing hide her, and her head is bent somewhat forward as she peers out to the left. Note how similar the placement of Becky (Fig. 12.4) is to the Ghost of Clytemnestra (Fig. 12.5), and the linear nature of both figures. Note also how Becky’s downcast face echoes Clytemnestra’s as she peers around folds of drapery. The resemblance between these two pictures suggests that

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63 Symmons 1984, 80.

64 Symmons 1984, 25.

65 Symmons 1984, 45.

66 Symmons 1984, 100.

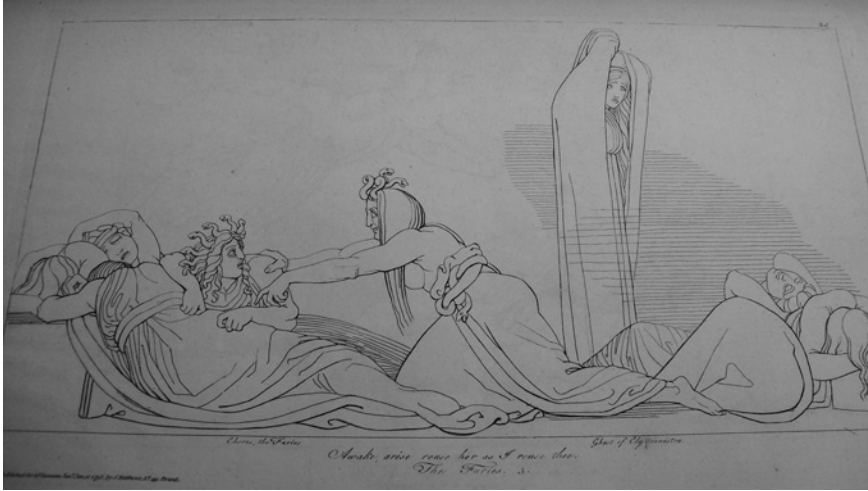
67 On Aeschylus’ influence on these individuals, see Ziolkowski this volume.

68 Symmons 1984, 18.

69 Ray 1946, 288.

70 Ray 1955, 154.

71 Note that the Potter translation titles the tragedy, *The Furies*.

FIGURE 12.5 *Furies 3.*

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*Vanity Fair* references not only the *Agamemnon* but also the entire *Oresteia* through a shift in drawing style.

In view of this, a number of scenes early in the novel take on greater significance. When Becky, as a charity student who is working as a junior teacher for her tuition at school, refused to add additional teaching duties without additional pay, Miss Pinkerton, the schoolmistress, declared, "I have nourished a viper in my bosom," an almost verbatim quotation of Clytemnestra's statement about Orestes in the *Libation Bearers*.<sup>72</sup> Despite Becky's rejection of that description, she is visually aligned with serpents or vipers throughout the novel. A few pages beyond the scene just described, Amelia chastises Becky for her "wicked, revengeful thoughts." Becky replies, "Revenge may be wicked but it's natural."<sup>73</sup> So, at the very beginning of the novel, Becky becomes associated with both vipers and vengeance. As the novel progresses, Becky disappears from the narrative from time to time. Each time she re-emerges, the pictorial capital for the chapter in which she re-emerges incorporates the image of a snake. In chapter 14, for example, the capital "A" is adorned with a snake entwined around the right leg and curling around the crosspiece. In the capital illustration for chapter 63, "In Which We Meet An Old Acquaintance," Becky

72 VF 14. Potter 372: "Ah me! I gave this dragon birth, I nurs'd him!" *Cho.* 928–9.

73 VF 10.



FIGURE 12.6  
*Chapter 14, initial letter 'S'.*  
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is pictured holding a staff entwined with a snake. A second snake entwined around the tip arches off the staff into an "S" (Fig. 12.6).

Note that here, too, the soft, rounded hair and dress of Becky has been straightened. Her hair is now loose, long, and linear rather than soft and up-swept into a bun. She wears a long, Grecian looking dress. Rows of horizontal lines, a Flaxman technique fill the backdrop. This Becky is a precursor to the flying female figure of chapter 32, "In Which Jos Takes Flight, and The War Is Brought To A Close" (Fig. 12.7).

This flying Becky echoes Flaxman's drawing of "The Descent of Discord" from the *Iliad* (Fig. 12.8). Both figures have free flowing hair and outstretched arms. Discord carries two torches while the figure in the Thackeray illustration seems to have a torch and a sword. Both have one foot down, and somewhat flowing and floating garments. As they fly horizontally across the page, they are offset by rows of horizontal lines in the background. Flaxman's Discord, in turn, is a precursor to his vision of the Furies in the *Eumenides* (Fig. 12.9).





FIGURE 12.7 *Chapter 32, vignette capital.*

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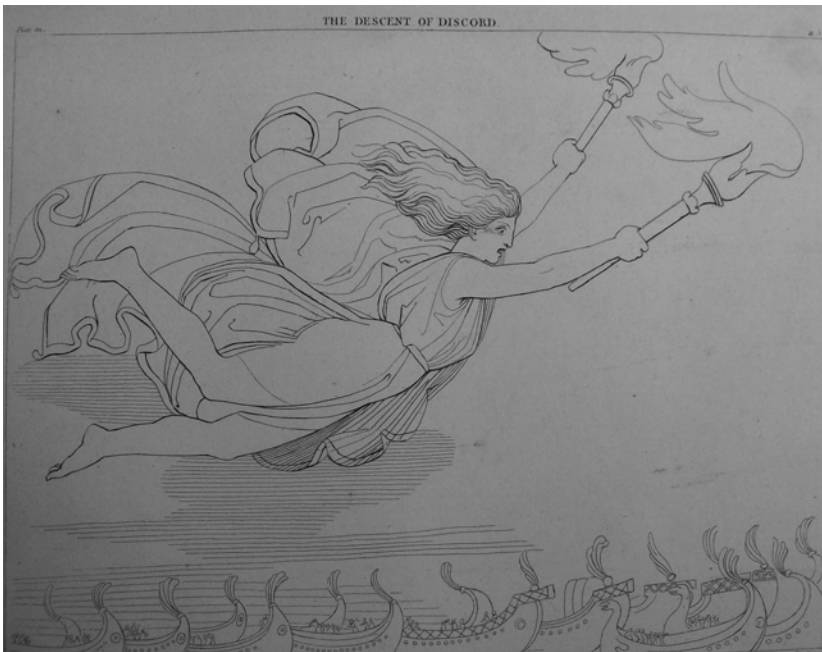


FIGURE 12.8 *The Descent of Discord.*

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FIGURE 12.9 *Furies* 4.

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The visual link between the Furies and the “Descent of Discord” echoes the melding of Discord and Fury in the *Agamemnon*. Cassandra calls on Discord “whose insatiable rage / Pursues this race,” while the chorus responds, “What Fury dost thou call within this house / to hold her orgies?”<sup>74</sup> In the interchange, Discord and the Fury become one and the same. In the Flaxman outline illustrations, the torches, and also the arms of some of the Furies, are encircled with snakes, like Becky’s staff (Fig. 12.6). The horizontal flying movement of Discord with outstretched arms is repeated in the vignette capital. In retrospect, the Becky figure in the capital “S” of chapter 63, (Fig. 12.6), becomes the image of a Fury, a spirit of vengeance, with her serpent entwined staff, long flowing hair, and loose garment. It is this figure that is repeated in “Becky’s second appearance as Clytemnestra.”<sup>75</sup> The visual reference to the Guérin painting and the caption lead to Clytemnestra, but the drawing technique that

74 Potter 277; *Ag.* 1114–20.

75 Meisel 1983, 337 considers “Becky’s second appearance in the character of Clytemnestra” a failure in the collaboration between text and picture. If the series of illustrations just discussed are associative repetitions of Flaxman outline illustrations, then the collaboration between text and image is successful.

references Flaxman leads to a Fury. Clytemnestra claims to be the victim of her husband while simultaneously planning to wreak vengeance on him. As a vengeance seeker, she becomes a Fury. So, too, Becky, “the victim” of society as an impoverished orphan, becomes a spirit of vengeance. She begins with a tormented soul and slowly transforms into torment itself.

Through the visual allusions of the later illustrations in *Vanity Fair* to well-known Flaxman line drawings just discussed, Thackeray develops as intricate a web of imagery as had Aeschylus. Aeschylus developed the imagery of woven materials and their trapping potential from the *Agamemnon* to the *Libation Bearers*. When Orestes identifies himself to her, Electra says, “With wily trains thou wou’dst ensnare me, stranger.”<sup>76</sup> Orestes, in turn, compares himself and Electra to orphans and Clytemnestra to a snake who killed their eagle father: “Reft of the parent eagle, that, inwreath’d / In the dire serpent’s spiry volumes perish’d.”<sup>77</sup> Just as Becky becomes associated with serpents through the illustrations discussed above, so Aeschylus equates Clytemnestra with a serpent. The serpent image shifts from Clytemnestra to Orestes through Clytemnestra’s dream. When he hears of the dream, Orestes understands that he is the serpent.<sup>78</sup>

While Aeschylus repeats the images of ensnarement and trapping from the *Agamemnon* to the *Libation Bearers* and develops the image of serpents in the *Libation Bearers* that carries over into the *Eumenides*, Thackeray borrows the visual equivalent from Flaxman to create a counterpoint to his text. Though the narrative of *Vanity Fair* is not overtly akin to the *Oresteia*, reading Thackeray’s illustrations in conjunction with it leads to the conclusion that just as the Flaxman illustrations and the Guérin painting have been reinterpreted and transformed by Thackeray, so too has Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*. At the end of the *Oresteia*, the Furies acquiesce to Athena and transform into the Eumenides. Potter uses the Latin Minerva to refer to the Greek Athena in his translation. Thackeray makes use of Minerva. In chapter 2, he details the family background of Becky and explains how she happened to be at Miss Barbara Pinkerton’s school as a charity student; that is, Thackeray explains what “society” has done to Becky. It is in this chapter that Becky rebelled against Miss Pinkerton’s request to take on additional duties without a corresponding raise. Thackeray refers to Miss Pinkerton as Minerva when she yields to Becky and

76 Potter 333; *Cho.* 220. A little later, the imagery of the net and the robe return when Electra and Orestes recall the net that trapped Agamemnon, Potter 346; *Cho.* 492–4, and when Orestes lays out the robe that had hindered Agamemnon’s movements when he was killed, Potter 375–6; *Cho.* 980–1006.

77 Potter 335; *Cho.* 246–9.

78 Potter 348–50; *Cho.* 527–50.

cries out about having nourished a viper.<sup>79</sup> In this first contest of wills, Becky wins against Miss Pinkerton (Minerva), who, as an educator of upper class young women, promulgates society's *mores*. At the end of the novel, however, Becky has been brought to task and yields to society in turn as the Furies yield to Athena.<sup>80</sup> She becomes a reputable member of society as shown in her works of piety and generosity.

### Conclusion

The question as to why Thackeray raises the ghost of the *Oresteia* through the interplay of text and image in *Vanity Fair* remains. Potter's introduction to the translation of the *Eumenides* (*Furies*) suggests a partial answer. After describing the mayhem that the Furies caused among Athenian audiences, Potter continues, "The translator dares assure the English ladies, for whom he has too great a respect to offer them any thing that can have the least tendency to hurt them, that they may read this play with the utmost safety. These antient virgins are, to be sure, at first a little wayward, and rather outrageous: but they soften by degrees, till they become perfectly good-humoured, and the best company in the world."<sup>81</sup> This same description could be applied to Becky Sharp. She is now the "best company" rather than the most interesting or the most entertaining. There is the hope, not of redemption, but of integration and accommodation. The Becky Sharp who cried by herself at night as a child because of anger and learned to be a "dissembler,"<sup>82</sup> has been softened down until she could confine herself within the restrictions of society.

Through Becky's cycle from victim to victimizer, Thackeray draws attention to her strengths: her cleverness,<sup>83</sup> her good humor, and her energy and life force. He also shows how these qualities pose a threat to society by allying

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79 VF 14.

80 This transformation of Becky, a foreigner since her mother was French, from a threat to British society to a benevolent spirit echoes the argument Kennedy 2014 made for the Furies in the *Eumenides* being incorporated into the *polis* as metics: "an external threat incorporated into Athens as protectors of or contributors to the fertility of the city" in chapter 2, "The Ideology of the Metic Women."

81 387.

82 VF 14. Potter 1777, 211 had described Clytemnestra with similar words in the introduction to the *Agamemnon*: high-spirited, artful, close, determined" but also "dangerous."

83 Rawdon Crawley, her husband, says of Becky, "You have head enough for both of us" (VF 162), which is, perhaps, an echo of the characterization of Clytemnestra as *androboulon* (planning like a man) when she is first introduced (*Ag.* 11).

Becky with Napoleon when he draws her dressed as Napoleon in the illustrated capital for chapter 64. Napoleon, too, had energy and cleverness and life force, but consider what it did to the world around him. It ultimately brought chaos to society. Becky, too, brings chaos and discord of one sort or another to those around her: to the Sedleys, to the Crawley family, and to Amelia. Napoleon and Becky are dangerous people, a threat to the comfortable enjoyment of life, a potential Waterloo.<sup>84</sup> And yet, what has the world lost in having Becky devote her life to works of piety? What has the world lost in having the Furies subside into the Eumenides? Perhaps much, but it may also have prevented another fall of Troy or another Waterloo.<sup>85</sup>

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84 Camus 2007, 465 makes this point.

85 I would like to thank the Center for Hellenic Studies for a non-residential fellowship in 2012–13 and the President and administration of Utica College for granting me a sabbatical in the spring, 2013, both of which allowed me to develop this paper. I would also like to thank the librarians and staff at Olin Library and the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University, Case Library, Colgate University, and Bird Library, Syracuse University for all of their help.

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# Form and Money in Wagner's *Ring* and Aeschylean Tragedy

*Richard Seaford*

## Introduction

The evidence for the influence of Greek tragedy on Wagner includes numerous statements by Wagner about Greek tragedy and numerous specific thematic similarities between Greek tragedy and his operas. This evidence has been repeatedly discussed,<sup>1</sup> and I do not have space here even to summarise it. Nor do I have space for any kind of overall interpretation, or to consider the musical dimension. I focus rather on suggesting a specific similarity between the *Ring* as a whole and the Aeschylean trilogy. In doing so I will suggest some influences on Wagner (or at least striking similarities) that—except where I acknowledge it—I have not found in any of the scholarship.

I must start by stating three things that *are* already well known. Firstly, there is the similarity of form between Aeschylus and the *Ring*. Wagner achieves Aeschylean coherence and economy by combining episodes that in his Nordic and Germanic sources were quite separate from each other, but also by eliminating numerous events and characters, so as to produce a single coherent narrative, marked by a sense of inexorability over three successive generations, in a trilogy<sup>2</sup> consisting of a few decisive actions in a sequence of (often agonistic) scenes, in many of which there are only two or three characters.

Secondly, the unity of the *Ring* depends largely on the ring: made by Alberich from gold stolen from the Rhine, the ring is then stolen from Alberich by Wotan, cursed by Alberich, paid by Wotan to the giants for building Valhalla, guarded by Fafner, coveted by Alberich and Mime, taken by Siegfried after slaying Fafner, given by Siegfried to Brunnhilde, still coveted by Alberich and by Hagen, snatched from Brunnhilde by Siegfried, and finally returned to the Rhine. The ring is contested almost throughout the *Ring*, desired by dwarves,

1 Most notably by Schadowaldt 1970 and Ewans 1982, and recently by Foster 2010. See bibliography below and Ewans, this volume.

2 The Wagnerian trilogy is preceded by a “Vorabend” (*Rheingold*), the Aeschylean is followed by a satyr play.



gods, and giants, mediating their interactions, and possessed in succession by a dwarf, a god, a giant, a dragon, a hero, an ex-Valkyrie, the hero again, and finally the Rhinedaughters.

Thirdly, the ring—it is frequently emphasised by various characters—bestows great wealth and power over the whole world. With it Alberich forces the Nibelungs to amass for himself by their labour wealth that “will increase in the future.” The desirability and cursed power of the ring expresses the ambivalence of money. None of this is new.<sup>3</sup> My own suggestion begins with a simple observation about the relationship between form and theme.

It is the potential omnipotence of money, and its consequent near-universal desirability, that unifies the disparate mythical material combined by Wagner. The result is coherence not only of form but also of form with theme, for it is precisely the power of money that—in the *Ring* as in reality—brings together heterogeneous agents and mediates relations between them. Gold, says Alberich, is desired by “all that lives,” and he would rather Wotan take his life than the ring.<sup>4</sup>

Formal unity is created not just by the universal desirability of money but also by the temporal continuity inherent in the movement of money. At the end of *Rheingold*, as the gods triumphantly proceed to Valhalla, there appear the Rhinedaughters demanding their gold back, and then in *Die Walküre* Wotan, fearing that Alberich will regain the ring, declares that he must wrest it back from the giant to whom he paid it. At the end of *Agamemnon* the triumphant Aigisthos' plan to use Agamemnon's money to rule the citizens (1638–9) is met by a prediction of the coming of Orestes, already foreseen by Cassandra. Throughout both *Ring* and *Oresteia* each success necessitates disaster. The principle that causes a metaphorical net to fall over Troy to punish its excess (*Agamemnon* 355–84, 461–75, etc.) seems to trap its conqueror in a net (1382–3, etc.). Likewise, Wotan laments that “these are the bonds that bind me; I, lord of contracts, am now a slave to the contracts,” and that “in my own fetters I caught myself.”

### The *Oresteia*

In a famous passage of his autobiography Wagner describes the powerful impact on him (in 1847) of reading Aeschylus in the translation by Droysen, in

3 E.g. on form see Ewans 1982, 63–6; on money Shaw 1923.

4 The strange preference for money over life occurs at Sophokles *Antigone* 322, and is implied at Aeschylus *Septem* 697 (if correctly interpreted).

particular, the *Oresteia*. Distinct (albeit loosely connected) epic narratives—the murders of Agamemnon and Klytaimnestra—were combined by Aeschylus with previous and subsequent events into a single narrative.<sup>5</sup> What holds this new narrative together is conflict, over three generations, for the power and wealth of the royal household, which is disputed by the brothers Atreus and Thyestes, then taken from Atreus' son Agamemnon by Thyestes' son Aigisthos, from whom it is taken by Agamemnon's son Orestes. The violence of the successive struggles is frequently represented as for economic benefit, or at least in terms of economic exchange.<sup>6</sup> It also frequently seems impelled by unseen forces, particularly, the curse and its agents.<sup>7</sup> Droysen sometimes even introduces the curse where it is not in the Greek, with the result that “his *Oresteia* is the saga of a curse-ridden house.”<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Wagner in the *Ring* created coherence around curse-driven conflict for an emblem of money.

The Aeschylean and Wagnerian patterns are each obtained by condensing and reshaping a combination of traditional narratives. But the Germanic and Nordic narratives out of which Wagner created the *Ring* are so diverse<sup>9</sup> that he had to be more eclectic than Aeschylus in creating the “unitarian (*einheitvolle*) form” that for the Greek tragic poet “lay mapped out for him in the framework of the myth.”<sup>10</sup> A ring occurs in various of Wagner's sources, but without ever having the potential to confer mastery over the world.<sup>11</sup> He innovates by giving the ring not only universal power but also a structuring role from beginning to end of the narrative—by providing it with the Rhine as origin and final destination.<sup>12</sup> As for the curse on the ring, it did occur in the Prose Edda: the dwarf Andvari, robbed of treasure and ring by the gods, “said that the ring should cost everyone who possessed it his life.”<sup>13</sup> But Alberich's curse on the ring is much more elaborate, bringing to its possessors not just death, but

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5 This is uncertain, because so much earlier Greek literature has been lost.

6 *Agamemnon* 1331–42, 1561–3, 1638–9; *Libation Bearers* 135–6, 301, 306–13, 372, 518–21, 801, 943; *Eumenides* 319–20, 757–8.

7 *Agamemnon* 1086–93, 1477, 1481–2, 1501–3, 1565, 1583–1602; *Libation Bearers* 692, 924, 1075–6; *Eumenides* 417.

8 Shown by Ewans 1982, 30.

9 Detailed account in Cooke 1979.

10 Wagner *Opera and Drama*, 156. In tragedy, which took mythical compression to an extreme (155), myth expresses itself as a single decisive action in which a great idea reveals itself (156).

11 For the closest to an exception see Cooke 1979, 138.

12 In Wagner's sources the treasure (not the ring) is hidden or thrown into the Rhine, but not to conclude a narrative: Cooke 1979, 135.

13 Cooke 1979, 223–4.

unhappiness ("as long as he lives let him die yearning to die, lord of the ring as slave of the ring"), and, to those who do not possess it, ravaging envy. The curse proves effective.

### The Theban Trilogy

The *Oresteia* is not the only Aeschylean influence on Wagner. The sources of Aeschylus' Theban trilogy were also diverse. One lost Theban epic (*Oidipodeia*) told the story of Oedipus, including his curse on his sons Eteokles and Polyneikes, another (*Thebais*) narrated the unsuccessful siege of Thebes by Polyneikes supported by six external warriors, and a third (*Epigoni*) the eventual successful capture of Thebes by the sons of the slain seven. Droysen describes how Aeschylus concentrated these events into two trilogies, his mode being "to increase affliction through affliction and *Schuld* (guilt, debt) through *Schuld*."<sup>14</sup> The only surviving play, the *Septem*, frequently refers to invisible forces operating over generations, in particular to Oedipus' curse to the effect that his sons will divide their property by the sword.<sup>15</sup> Here too, as in *Oresteia* and *Ring*, diverse narratives have been combined around conflict for power and wealth. Scholars have detected numerous specific Aeschylean influences on Wagner without recognising this fundamental similarity, and they have neglected the Theban trilogy.

In his *Opera and Drama* (1851) Wagner discusses the Theban myth. The incest of Oedipus and Iocasta was not contrary to nature, but rather an offence against custom (*Gewohnheit*). When subsequently Eteokles refused to abide by his oath to share the kingship with his brother Polyneikes, the citizens sided with Eteokles, and in doing so:

... showed a practical instinct for the nature of property (*Eigenthum*), which everybody wanted to enjoy alone, not to share with another. Every citizen who recognised in property the guarantee of customary (*gewohnte*) quiet was thereby an accomplice of the unbrotherly deed of Eteokles, the supreme proprietor (*Eigenthümer*). The power of self-serving *Gewohnheit* thus supported Eteokles (185).

14 2.153. All translations are by myself (except for the letter to Liszt), but for Wagner's prose I give references to the unsatisfactory translation by Ashton Ellis.

15 *Sept.* 819, 832, 840–1, 886, 894, 898, 945–6, 954, 977–88; and mentioned earlier at 70, 655, 695–701, 709, 720–3, 766–7. Note also 801–2, 842, 742–52, "a transgression born long ago, quickly punished but remaining to the third generation."

*Gewohnheit* (custom) “had already become their virtual lawgiver.” And in the subsequent rule of Kreon, who deprived Polyneikes of burial, the state (*Staat*) came to represent nothing but abstract *Gewohnheit*, only to be overthrown in the overthrow of Kreon (the *Staat* personified) by the pure human-love (*reine Menschenliebe*) embodied in Antigone. “The love-curse (*Liebesfluch*) of Antigone annihilated the *Staat*.” The kernel of the concrete *Staat*

... appears to us in the Oedipus-saga: as the seed of all crimes we recognise the sovereignty of Laios, who for the sake of its undiminished possession became an unnatural father. From this possession become ownership (*Eigenthum*), which amazingly is regarded as the basis of all good order, flows all the wickedness of myth and history (192).

But the downfall of the *Staat* is inevitable. In the Oedipus myth, “we win an intelligible picture of the whole history of humankind from the beginnings of society to the necessary downfall (*Untergang*) of the *Staat*” (191). The “whole history of humankind” moves from nature to the *Staat* based on self-serving *Gewohnheit* and *Eigenthum*, and from there to the final destruction of the *Staat* by human love.

*Opera and Drama* was published in November 1851, in a period in which the *Ring* was taking shape in Wagner’s mind. The relevance of its discussion of the Theban myth to the *Ring* was finally recognised in 1982 by Borchmeyer,<sup>16</sup> but even he did not describe the full significance for the *Ring* of Droysen’s account of the Theban trilogy. As well as reading Aeschylus in Droysen’s translation, Wagner praised the comments of Droysen,<sup>17</sup> who describes as follows what he calls the main content (*Hauptinhalt*) of the trilogy to which *Septem* belonged:

The most terrible paternal curse, the power of blind, inexhaustible wildness, rages on and on against the particular lineage, until the last branch withers, until the last memory of its unhappy existence is extinguished, and a new, milder *Geschlecht* (family, race) rules more happily in the palace of the Kadmea.<sup>18</sup>

16 Borchmeyer 1982, 306–7.

17 Droysen 1932. It is important to be aware that Wagner in Dresden in 1847 possessed the 1832 edition, for Droysen’s comments “in the later versions appear substantially changed or abbreviated.” von Westernhagen 1966, 39, 84.

18 Droysen 1932, 2.109.

Oedipus' curse is familiar from the *Septem*. But whence the "new, milder *Geschlecht*?"

Droysen describes the trilogy as reconstructed by Welcker, but also proposes a reconstruction of his own, in which the sequence of plays is *Nemeans*, *Septem*, *Epigoni*. He assumes that in the lost *Epigoni* the sons of the seven slain besiegers of Thebes succeeded in destroying the city rather than just capturing it. The only surviving fragment of the play mentioned marriage, from which Droysen infers that this was the marriage of Antigone to a son of Kreon. Fate was finally fulfilled in the downfall (*untergehen*) of the royal family, and of the city itself, at the hands of a new and milder *Geschlecht*, and the marriage of Antigone (to a relative, we note) formed a joyful contrast to the destruction (*Vernichtung*) of the city. Elsewhere Droysen characterises Aeschylean tragedy as a whole as moving from initial "dark, silent doom (*Verhängnis*)" to the advent of "a new, happier *Geschlecht*" (283). In the *Ring*, Wotan fathers a new race, the Wälsungs, a *Wunschgeschlecht*, that—in the context of the imminent downfall of the gods—he hopes will free him from guilt and conflict, and that in fact will embody the antithesis presented by heterosexual love (even if incestuous) to power. This idea is not found in Wotan's northern source, the *Volsunga saga*.<sup>19</sup>

As for the annihilated royal family, Laios became an unnatural father—Wagner tells us—for the sake of his undiminished possession of rulership, which grew into *Eigenthum* (ownership), the source of all crimes. Sovereign power is here united with wealth in *Eigenthum*, the persistent source and object of the conflict, from Laios exposing his son to Eteokles cursed to fight his own brother for *Eigenthum*. The *Septem* is a powerful dramatization of curse-driven conflict for *Eigenthum*, especially in the departure of Eteokles, impelled by the curse to divide his inheritance with the sword.<sup>20</sup> In both Aeschylean trilogies, as in the *Ring*, the curse is uttered by a victim in the persistent conflict for *Eigenthum* (Thyestes, Oedipus, Alberich). And most of the curse-driven conflict for the ring is, as in *Septem*, between brothers (Alberich-Mime, Fafner-Fasolt, Hagen-Gunther).

### The *Prometheia*

Numerous similarities have been observed between *Prometheia* and *Ring*. Here again, Wagner was also influenced by Droysen's comments. Only one play of

19 Cooke 1979, 282–307.

20 *Sept.* 695, 700, 709, 720–33.

the trilogy survives (*Prometheus Bound*),<sup>21</sup> in which Zeus is the cosmic projection of the typical *tyrannos*. As a god, he does not express concern with money, but is frequently called *tyrannos*, and has the isolation and the absolute power bestowed on the human *tyrannos* by money,<sup>22</sup> as well as his insecurity: Zeus is no less anxious than Wotan to ensure a permanent future.

According to Droysen, the victory of Zeus was the victory of the human spirit (*Menschengeist*) embodied in his ally Prometheus. But subsequently the *Menschengeist* "succumbed to the individual life (*Einzelleben*), the finiteness of creaturely existence," the *Gattung* (species, type) breaks up into individuals, innocence succumbs to wilfulness, and "the blind selflessness of natural life comes to an end in the intense centralisation of selfishness and of consciousness."<sup>23</sup> As a result, Zeus wants to destroy the human race, but Prometheus saves it and gives it the power to win back the world it has lost. Droysen had also explained (160) that Zeus wanted to create a new, more obedient *Geschlecht*. But Zeus is under the curse of his displaced father Kronos:

For the ethical world which he rules is based on the overthrow of the previously ruling world order, and every age of the world that perishes, every declining epoch of history, leaves the same curse as inheritance for its successor in the domination of the world.

From this paternal curse Zeus can be freed only by a hero born of—in a fragment from the play—"a mortal woman from earth-born seed." The influence of this liberating mortal hero (Herakles) on Wagner, and of much else in the *Prometheia*, has been recognised.<sup>24</sup> But there is more. A morally serious combination—of a persistent curse, an order (political or cosmic) based on selfish individualism, the destruction of the order, and a new *Geschlecht*—occurs not only in Droysen's account of the *Prometheia*, but also in his account of the Theban trilogy, in Wagner's account of the Theban myth, and in the *Ring*. The selfish individualism of tragic *Eigenthum* is in Wagner embodied in the cursed ring.

21 In the lifetime of Wagner it was assumed to be by Aeschylus.

22 PV 186–7, 224–5, 304–6, etc.; Seaford 2003.

23 Droysen 1932, 2.210.

24 Ewans 1982, 256–60 downplays this influence.

## Isolation

It was in the latter half of the sixth century BCE, probably during the rule of the *tyrannos* Peisistratos, that coinage was introduced into Athens, in a period of significant and rapid cultural development that included the creation of the spectacular and entirely new genre of tragedy. Whether or not this development was facilitated by monetisation, tragedy develops in—and reflects—a world that had recently been rapidly and pervasively monetised by the arrival of coinage.<sup>25</sup> This is an important and generally unrecognised fact about Athenian tragedy.

The unprecedented<sup>26</sup> isolation of the individual of Athenian tragedy, in conflict with those closest to him (Agamemnon, Orestes, Oedipus, Kreon, Eteokles, and Zeus among many others), owes something, I believe, to the isolating potential of the new all-pervasive phenomenon of money. In the Theban tragedies of Sophocles, for instance, Oedipus and Kreon are each preoccupied by money, described as *tyrannos*,<sup>27</sup> and alienated from their closest kin, a combination found also in the *tyrannoi* described in historiography and philosophy: the *tyrannos* Polycrates murdered his brothers, and eventually fell through trying to amass enough money to rule the whole of Greece.<sup>28</sup> In the *Oresteia* and Theban trilogy, within the family one individual struggles with another for its *Eigenthum*, which provides both content and form: the universal motivation it provides in the real world (as money) holds together the trilogic narrative. Similarly, in the *Ring* several of the leading individuals are isolated, each in conflict with his closest kin (Wotan with Fricka and Brünnhilde, Alberich with Mime, Fasner with Fasolt, Hagen with Gunther), and all these male characters are drawn into conflict for the ring, which gives coherence to the *Ring*. The isolating effect of money is expressed not only in the scenes of conflict over the ring but also, exquisitely, in Wotan's rejection of the pleas of the other gods, his kin, to give the ring to the giants (in return for Freia), until instructed to do so by Erda.

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25    Seaford 2012.

26    In Homer even the otherwise isolated Odysseus has the firm support of Athena and of his family.

27    Soph. *OT* 124–5, 380–90, 541–4, 873–4, etc.; *Ant.* 293–301, 322, 326, 1036–9, 1056, 1062–3, etc.

28    Herodotus 3.39, 122–5.

## Props

In the *Ring*, in contrast to Aeschylus, the curse is embodied in a single object: money takes the form of a talismanic artefact, which in (pre-monetary) myth has magical power but seems to an audience in a monetised society to be also a symbol (of money). The same revealing combination of opposites—of money with pre-monetary (talismanic or magical) object—occurs in the ring that bestowed invisibility and thereby sovereign power on Gyges.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, the *tyrannos* Polycrates threw his seal-ring—as an emblem of his monetised prosperity—into the sea to avoid the resentment of the gods.<sup>30</sup> The ring in Wagner, finally thrown into the Rhine, is an emblem of the universal power of money, while the invisibility of monetary power is embodied in another magical object (the *tarnhelm*), and its substantiality in the treasure of gold. The invisible ubiquity of monetary power is dramatically embodied in Alberich, made invisible by the *tarnhelm* (“I am everywhere”), using the ring to force the Nibelungs to produce wealth “for him alone.” But gold partially reverts to being mere object when it covers Freia’s body as ransom for her, rather as in Aeschylus’ lost *Phrygians* it is weighed against Hektor’s body as ransom for it.

Some other objects visible in the *Ring* also embody power. Donner’s hammer, embodying the power of nature, yields to Wotan’s contract-guarding spear, which also overcomes the sword Nothung (emblem of heroism and sexuality) wielded by Siegmund, but is eventually overcome by Nothung wielded by Siegfried. Props in the *Ring* are limited in number but significant, as in Greek tragedy, in which they are sometimes magical and often ambivalent.<sup>31</sup> “The gifts of enemies are no gifts,” says Ajax before killing himself with the sword given him by Hector.<sup>32</sup> Siegmund proposes to kill Sieglinde and himself with “this sword, which a deceiver gave to a true man, which betrays me to my enemy.” No less ambivalent is the ring, promising to its possessor unlimited power and wealth but also unhappiness and death, created through the renunciation of love but becoming the embodiment of the love between Siegfried and Brünnhilde.

29 Plato *Republic* 359–60, 612b (ring and helmet of invisibility). On Wagner’s devotion to Plato see von Westernhagen 1966, 50–1.

30 It is narrated by Herodotus 3.41, of whose work Wagner possessed a copy at Dresden, von Westernhagen 1966, 94.

31 E.g. the magically destructive garments as gifts in Sophokles’ *Trachiniai* and Euripides’ *Medea*, or the libations in Aeschylus’ *Libation Bearers*.

32 Sophocles *Ajax* 665.



As an example of an ambivalent stage property in the *Oresteia* consider the textile “bought with silver” (949) on which Agamemnon walks into the house (to his death). Agamemnon hesitates to damage what he calls the wealth of the house, but Klytaimnestra responds that the sea is inexhaustible in “nourishing a wholly renewable gush, equal to silver, of much purple dye” (from a shellfish), and that “the house does not know to be poor.” The natural source of this artefact is, as of the ring, a vast mass of water. But the natural inexhaustibility of sea and dye here matters only if there is inexhaustible silver to buy it, and this implies the unlimitedness which the Greeks saw as a dangerous characteristic of money, and which repeatedly marks the power and wealth bestowed by the ring.<sup>33</sup> The textile is closely associated<sup>34</sup> with the textile that Klytaimnestra uses both to trap Agamemnon and as a shroud, describing it as “a covering without limit (*apeiron*) ... bad wealth of cloth” (1382–3). The ambivalent textile is associated with the shocking unlimitedness of the money by which it is bought—one instance among many of Athenian tragedy using (pre-monetary) myth to represent the disruptive effect of money. At the end of *Libation Bearers* Orestes addresses this same shroud as a physical link with the father he never met (as does Siegfried addressing Nothing), while he descends into frenzy (997ff.).

### Nature and Love against Money and Power?

We return to the relation of content to unitary form. According to Wagner, the Germanic sagas were originally all variations of a definite type of event, a type that derived from one simple religious notion, taken from the beholding of nature. But subsequently Christianity “annulled the religious faith, the fundamental view (*Grundanschauung*) of nature's essence” (162), with the result that the unity of the myth dispersed itself “into a thousandfold plurality; the kernel of action into a vast quantity of actions.” Our natural inference that Wagner envisaged the unitarian form of the *Ring* as restoring the primeval unity of Germanic Mythos is confirmed by the fact that it is from the narrative of Siegfried that he derives his conception of the religious beholding of nature as underlying Germanic myth: “In one saga—that of Siegfried—we may now look with some clarity into its original kernel, which teaches us not a little about the essence of myth in general” (161). Set against the single abstract (invisible)

33 Wellgunde in *Rheingold* 1 (“Masslose Macht”), Wotan in *Rheingold* 2 (“Macht und Schätze ... ohne Mass”), Alberich in *Rheingold* 4 (“Macht ohne Mass”), Wotan in *Die Walküre* 2 (“masslose Macht”).

34 Taplin 1978, 79–82.

power of money is the single notion that Wagner found at the root of authentic Germanic myth, nature embodied in the heroic individual (Siegfried).

Wagner invented the forging of the ring from gold stolen from the Rhine, and so as transgressive against nature. But its creation also transgressed against love. Wagner also invented Alberich's renunciation—of the power and delight of heterosexual love—that is a precondition for the forging of the ring. This, then, resonates in Fafner's—and Wotan's—preference for the ring over Freia, and in the paradoxical transformation of the ring into an embodiment of love. Siegfried states that for love he would gladly forgo the world obtained by the ring.

This is not the place to enter the debate on the meaning of the ending of the *Ring* (in its various versions). Suffice it to say that it contains, not least in the music, an element of redemption—whether in the return of the ring to nature (the Rhine) or in the love of Brünnhilde for Siegfried—that has seemed at odds with Greek tragedy. For instance, “in the *Ring* in general we find something profoundly alien to the spirit of an ancient tragedy ... Wagner, believing in the essential goodness of human feelings, is not a true tragedian.”<sup>35</sup> Greek tragedy does not on the whole set nature or love against money.<sup>36</sup> But the *Oresteia*, Theban trilogy,<sup>37</sup> *Prometheia*, and *Ring* each combines older narratives to conclude with a permanent end (in *polis* or cosmos) to the cycle of conflict driven by individual self-interest. The essential goodness of human feelings was the issue neither for Wagner nor for Aeschylus. What mattered for them both was (among much else) the hope inherent in the spectacular musical dramatisation of communal myth by which monetised individualism is permanently transcended.

35 Lloyd-Jones 1982, 140; note also George Steiner's ill-informed antithesis between Greek tragedy and the optimism of *Götterdämmerung* (1961, 127).

36 Although the omnipotence of money is equated with *erōs* at e.g. Euripides fr. 324 and fr. *adesp.* 129. And those *Naturwesen* the satyrs are not infrequently ignorant or contemptuous of money in the remains of satyric drama.

37 Not only in Droysen's reconstructions. The original version of *Septem* (third play in the trilogy) ended with the saving of the *polis* (793–6, 820) and by prefiguring the *polis* hero-cult of the fratricides (1002–4 were the final lines: cf. Pausanias 9.18.3). In general the Aeschylean transition from the age of heroes to the present is not unlike the “Feuerbachian” transition some have detected in the *Ring* from gods to humanity.

## Conclusion

The “closeness and affinity” of Wagner with Aeschylus<sup>38</sup> is paradoxical, given the vast gap in time and their many obvious differences. It derives, I suggest, from a specific similarity between their historical position. Fruitful influence across centuries and between different kinds of society is especially favoured by there being a specific similarity between the influencing and influenced works in respect of the historical conditions governing their main preoccupations. It is not just that Wagner admired Aeschylus and so was, as has often been noted, influenced by him in various details. Despite the enormous and unbridgeable differences between fifth-century Athens and mid-nineteenth century Germany, historical developments led both men to dramatise—each in his different way—the transcendence, by pre-monetary myth, of the universal power of monetised wealth that unifies both the content and the form of the myth.

Aeschylean tragedy was created in a society that on the one hand still accorded a central place to myth, but on the other hand had been recently monetised. The *Ring* was created in a society that had long been monetised, but in which the power of money, its tendency as capital to dissolve all other relations, was advancing in the way memorably described in the *Communist Manifesto* the year after Wagner, soon to be a revolutionary in Dresden, first read the *Oresteia*:

All fixed, rusted relations with their following of ancient and venerable ideas and opinions are dissolved, all new-formed ones age before they can ossify. Everything established and standing evaporates, everything holy is profaned ...

In a society becoming ever more pervaded by money, be it Athens or Dresden, the power of pre-monetary myth provides an effective way of relativizing the power of money.

What the form and content of the Aeschylean trilogy owed to the recent advent of a single omnipotent object of universal desire contributed to the possibility of its profound and fruitful influence on the mythical dramatisation of the power of money in the nineteenth century. But it was of course not by Aeschylus that Wagner was impelled to dramatize the omnipotence of money. In his letters and autobiography he sometimes alternates between absorption

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38 Nietzsche in his *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* (1976) 22.

in the creative power of myth and disgust at having to be preoccupied with money. "It is not my business to 'earn money,'" he wrote to Liszt, "but it is the business of my admirers to give me as much money as I want, to do my work in a cheerful mood" (3 October 1855). In 1881 he wrote:

Clever though be the many thoughts expressed by mouth or pen about the invention of money and its enormous value as a civiliser, against such praise of it we should consider the curse to which it has always been exposed in saga and poetry. If gold here appears as the demon strangling the innocence of humanity, our greatest poet shews at last the invention of paper money as devil's' mischief. The doom-laden ring of the Nibelungs might as a stock-exchange portfolio (*Börsenportefeuille*) bring to completion the gruesome picture of the ghostly master of the world.<sup>39</sup>

We cannot end without acknowledging the darker side of this vision. Just as the tragic Kreon projected the corrupting all-pervasiveness of money onto barbarian orientals, so Wagner associated it with the Jew, who "rules, and will rule, so long as money remains the power before which all our doing and our activity lose their vigour."<sup>40</sup>

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39 *Know Thyself*, 269.

40 Sophocles *Antigone* 1037–9; Wagner *Judaism in Music*, 81.

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# *Eumenides* and *Newmenides*: Academic Furies in Edwardian Cambridge

Patrick J. Murphy and Fredrick Porcheddu

## Introduction

The Cambridge Greek Play (CGP) series was inaugurated in 1881 from the conviction that ancient Greek drama could and should be performed in its original language, with “archaeological accuracy” informing stage presentation as far as possible.<sup>1</sup> Its first seven productions—*Ajax*, 1882; *Birds*, 1883; *Eumenides*, 1885; *Oedipus Tyrannus*, 1887; *Ion*, 1890; *Iphigenia in Tauris*, 1894; *Wasps*, 1897; *Agamemnon*, 1900—may be considered truly pioneering efforts both in the scholarly pitch of their dramaturgy and the degree to which they successfully attracted interest beyond the Cambridge area.<sup>2</sup> After the dawn of the new century, though, the valuation of this principle was diluted by a proliferation of new theatrical voices and media and the development of modern-language literary studies: in 1903, for the first time, a CGP was repeated (*Birds*, which,

1 Macintosh 1997, 292 and n. 14. The historicist impulse of the early Greek plays is also discussed by Stray 1998a, 157–61; Easterling 1999 (with an appended production list); as well as by the CGP website histories by Wilkinson 2014 and Lacey 2015. A contemporary narrative, foregrounding the role played by longtime CGP “producer” John Willis Clark, is in Edwards 1909. Something akin to a statement of the series’ principles can be found in many of the published editions of the early plays: Waldstein 1882, for example, was clearly intended to be read prior to seeing the play and had the function of orienting a general audience. The principle was widely lauded: “If ever the special function and duty of an ancient university was clearly fulfilled, it was in this great and successful effort,” said a reviewer of *Eumenides* (Mahaffey 1885).

2 Reviews of the 1885 *Eumenides*, for example, were remarkably widespread for a student performance: *Pall Mall Gazette* 6464 (2 Dec. 1885); *Standard* 19153 (2 Dec.); *Daily News* 12369–70 (2 and 3 Dec.); *Athenaeum* 3032 (5 Dec.) 741; *Cambridge Review* (9 Dec.); *Graphic* 837 (12 Dec.); Mahaffey 1885; *Saturday Review* 60.1572 (12 Dec.) 775–6; *London Society* 49.289 (Jan. 1886) 99–104; *Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 27.515 (1 Jan.) 23–4; and *All the Year Round* 37.892 (2 Jan.) 421–6. By comparison, reviews of the 1906 *Eumenides*, while very positive, are fewer and more procedural: *Athenaeum* 4128 (8 Dec. 1906) 745–6; *Cambridge Independent Press* 4721 (7 Dec.) 6; “E.S.T.” 1906; *Speaker* (15 Dec.) 320–1.

since the series had already settled into its triennial pattern, appeared only six “seasons” after its premiere), and indeed, after 1900’s *Agamemnon* no new CGP was mounted until a complete *Oresteia* in 1921. While the Edwardian revivals continued to be effective in supporting classical pedagogy, interest among the general public noticeably dwindled—reduced by a perceived lack of novelty, perhaps, but also surely alienated by what was viewed as an academic dispute “between a high-profile scholarship integrated in general culture and social performance, and a more retiring and specialised mode of work.”<sup>3</sup> The effects of this coolness linger today, as recent performance histories tend to devote relatively little space to Edwardian productions of Greek drama.<sup>4</sup>

The present essay is motivated in part by this comparable inattention, but more so by the rich contexts of Greek dramatic performances we have found among the Edwardian (or Taft-Wilsonian) archival records of British and American universities. The CGP provides us with a convenient, but hardly unique, exemplar of rich community response to the Anglo-American reception of Greek drama just as the proliferation of entertainment options was beginning: 1903’s *Birds*, for example, was preceded by a series of free public lectures specifically designed to link stage and page and to promote critical discussion among the general community, and *Eumenides* (1906), *Wasps* (1909) and other revivals continued this valuable form of socio-academic outreach.<sup>5</sup> But in the records of these events we also find fascinating “co-dramatic”

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- 3 Stray 1998b. The *Cambridge Review* itself drew attention to the “laudatory but fairly commonplace” London reviews of 1903’s *Birds*, and by 1906 the London *Speaker* called the question: “Is it art or archaeology which is served by these performances?” (15 Dec. 1906, 320). Easterling (1999) discusses what may be the earliest of these criticisms, a notoriously acidic review by Max Beerbohm of 1900’s *Agamemnon*, which she attributes in part to “Oxonian malice” (44–5).
  - 4 Mitchell-Boyask 2009, 121–4 and 153–4. The breadth of Hall and Macintosh’s survey (2005) causes them to provide little comment on any of the Cambridge Greek Plays, but the 1906 performance is similarly omitted in Macintosh 1997. At the burgeoning *Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama* site, the 1885 *Eumenides* is record #826 and the 1906 revival is #833. Archival records of the early Greek plays are in the Cambridge University Library; their donation by J. W. Clark (designer for both *Eumenides* productions, further solidifying their similarity) is recorded in Bartholomew (1912, 9 and 110–11).
  - 5 Jebb’s lecture on *Birds* took place in the first week of November; Verrall’s, the following week, was effusively called “the greatest lecture of modern times” (*Cambridge Review*, 12 Nov. 1903, 67). In 1909 his lecture on *Wasps* drew nearly a thousand listeners (Easterling 1999, 43). The *Cambridge Review* of 21 Feb. 1907 publicly thanked all three prefatory lecturers on *Eumenides*: “We owe Professor Ridgeway a debt for the elucidation of the scene of the second act similar to that which we owe to Dr Verrall for his clear statement of the issues and conduct of the trial, and to Dr Headlam for his revelation of the magnificent symbolism of the final

events—public documents created by both faculty and students—which use the occasion of the Greek play to comment on contemporary controversies.

The 1906 CGP revival of *Eumenides*, the focus of the remainder of this essay, was in many ways a reproduction of its original, using the same text by Arthur Verrall and score by Charles Stanford that had received widespread praise in 1885;<sup>6</sup> but upon closer inspection we find the revived staging to be historically concomitant with another better-known public exhibition of Greek erudition—the competition for the Regius Professorship at Cambridge in January of 1906 and the complex judgments of professional behavior it brought into sharp relief. And the play's performance directly inspired two previously unstudied student parodies which significantly enrich our understanding both of the overall reception of Aeschylus and of student opinion on national and university politics.

### Reviving the Furies

The death of Sir Richard Jebb, the twenty-ninth Regius Professor of Greek, in December of 1905 awoke dormant grievances and forced the issue of how the university's conservative tradition of Greek studies would adapt to a modern academic landscape in which not only the compulsory language requirement but the value of Hellenism itself were being scrutinized. To fill the vacancy and help navigate these shoals, five men of powerfully distinct talents—James Adam, Walter Headlam, Henry Jackson, William Ridgeway, and Arthur Verrall—were required to give public job-talks (“praelections”) on a subject of their expertise as part of their candidacies for the Chair;<sup>7</sup> Adam was assigned to speak on a Pindar fragment, Headlam on the second chorus of *Agamemnon*,

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reconciliation” (260, referring to the spoken versions of Ridgeway 1907, Verrall 1906, and Headlam 1906).

6 The play was realized in six performances beginning on Friday, 30 November, at the New Theatre Royal in St. Andrew's Street. The full cast and crew of both productions, demonstrating broad collaboration between colleges, are listed in the front matter of Verrall and Stanford 1906, but it is germane that we note here its direction by King's College Provost Walter Durnford, military historian H. J. Edwards, and University Registry John Willis Clark. A. F. Scholfield (later University Librarian) headlined as Orestes, with Justin Brooke (later founder of the Marlowe Society) as the Pythian Prophetess, F. C. S. Carey as Athena, and a teenaged Rupert Brooke as the Herald.

7 The texts of the lectures are available in *Praelections* 1906. The occasion is examined in the inspired collection by Stray 2005, who calls the event “the final symbolic flourish of Victorian hellenism” (2). Judging the performances were the eighteen members of the University Council, though over 100 MAS attended (3–5).



Jackson on *Cratylus*, Ridgeway on *Suppliants*, and—significantly—Verrall on the vote of Athena in *Eumenides*. While Henry Jackson's age and collegiality prevailed (he held the Regius chair until his death in 1921), it is the spectacle of Arthur Verrall and Walter Headlam on the same dais on the same day that interests us here. For his part, Verrall spoke directly to his audience in his typically "hugely charismatic" style,<sup>8</sup> presenting an absorbing analysis of his assigned text and vividly revealing a variety of contexts in which it might be interpreted. Headlam, speaking next, had been coached by Charles Waldstein, but still failed to overcome his pathological rhetorical instincts: two-thirds of his lecture consisted of a text and translation which he both distributed to his audience in the form of a twenty-page handout and also read aloud; the remainder was devoted to minute textual detail.<sup>9</sup> This had the effect of eradicating context from his lecture and preventing emotional contact with the non-specialist majority in his audience, including the University Council making the decision. While the ultimate vote of the Council is not known, it is likely that Verrall lost out narrowly to Jackson.<sup>10</sup>

While a poor lecturing style need not have been an absolute barrier to success, it is inconceivable that the tableau failed to recall one of the most notorious events of Victorian classical studies, Headlam's public faying of Verrall fifteen years earlier in *On Editing Aeschylus*, his monograph devoted to exposing Verrall's editorial errors.<sup>11</sup> He was widely condemned in Britain for his disrespect, A. B. Cook likening him to a self-appointed philological hierophant concluding that "To publish such a reckless calumny on the character of an eminent scholar—a man who had examined in the Tripos before Mr. Headlam became a freshman—is a proceeding that cries aloud for some decisive token of public disapprobation."<sup>12</sup> This came in the form of a supremely cold shoulder:

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8 Lowe 2005, 142.

9 *Praelections* 1906, 101–37.

10 Lowe 2005, 156; Robinson 2005, 55 and 67.

11 Headlam 1891. The monograph follows the standard structure of a review, with Verrall's titles listed atop the first page and predicating the subsequent 158; Verrall's superhumanly temperate reply appeared the following year. While Headlam had other targets (T. G. Tucker, Basil Gildersleeve, and even Jebb himself), a perfect storm seems to have been created by Verrall's mischievous extravagances, Headlam's scholarly inflexibility, and the recent shift from anonymous to signed reviews. Goldhill 2002, 231–43 and Silk 2005 narrate the matter with aplomb.

12 Cook 1892. It is important to emphasize that neither Cook nor any other judge of his behavior denies Headlam's expertise, and that most reviewers of Headlam outside of Britain did not condemn his astringency. Cook's reference to Headlam's age is not immaterial to any discussion of his activities: born in 1866, he was twenty-seven years junior to Henry Jackson, fifteen to Verrall, eight to Ridgeway, and six to Adam.

Headlam remained impotent in the social intercourse of his field for the rest of his life, an alienation visible in matters both large and small (including, notably, his complete absence from the realization of any of the CGP productions). This can be read in retrospect both as the communal enforcement of normative behavior and the self-alienation of an arch-pedant who refused, even after the passage of so many years, to modulate his expressive style.<sup>13</sup>

Anecdotal circumstances like this, which can be found in each year of the Edwardian CGP productions (albeit nowhere else with such a loaded backstory) lead us to feel justified in seeing involvement with the Greek plays as a collateral indicator of professional success at Cambridge, one which did not assure preferment but which served in many ways as a marker of normativity. Yes, Headlam was alienated because of his attack on Verrall; but not only was his treatment of Verrall defined as an attack because it failed to conform to norms of scholarly propriety (including the fact that he chose an independent monograph instead of a periodical's review section as his venue), it was unaccompanied by projects in which he might have proven himself able to compromise with or cede control to colleagues. The ingloriously collaborative atmosphere of student theatre, where mediocrity and abjection depend like sandbags from the flies, were visible components of the professional identities of Jebb, Jackson, and Verrall for decades, and Verrall's ludic extravagances in particular figure in nearly every description of his identity. Since works by Aeschylus were the subject of fully half of the praelections we interpret the revival of *Eumenides* as in part a tribute to the late Jebb (he had suggested the original production), but also to the living Verrall by his friends on the CPG

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13 Headlam died suddenly from an unusual medical crisis in 1908. It is interesting to contemplate the proximity of his death to the composition of M. R. James' ghost story "Casting the Runes," with its central focus on the revenge instituted by a scorned scholar against his critics: James wrote Headlam's obituary in the *Times* (22 June 1908) as well as his entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and "Casting the Runes" first appeared in James 1911. (The authors are grateful to Robert Lloyd Parry for sharing this intriguing observation.).

In Headlam's published scholarship there is a palpable preference for the work of continental scholars (among them Müller, Weil, Ahrens, Hermann, Meineke, Wecklein, and Nauck, and even Abresch and Robortello), with few references to British figures except in disagreement. We find it difficult to explain this impulse entirely by his obvious taste for prevailing German textual criticism; contempt for the work of his British colleagues—and the assumption that the farther away wisdom lay the more durable it must be—surely played a role.

committee, a group of which Walter Headlam had never been—could never be?—part.<sup>14</sup>

One final anecdote about this revival will bring us to the subject of our two student parodies. We have said that the 1906 performance revisited its 1885 model exactly, and this is true regarding book, music, and overall design. On one very important point, however, the two differed: the earlier production featured a woman student, Janet E. Case, in the role of Athena. Case is singled out for special praise in every review we have seen, and is also remembered by name in every review of the 1906 revival; her distinctive photo in costume continues to be featured in histories of late Victorian drama.<sup>15</sup> She would later be a powerful influence in the Greek education of a young Virginia Woolf (especially the development of Woolf's elegaic voice) by "putting the classical yardstick" to modernism, and so meaningful was her performance to Woolf and others that on Case's death in 1937 Woolf eulogized that "there must still be some Cambridge men who remember her, a noble Athena, breaking down the tradition that only men acted in the Greek play."<sup>16</sup> But neither Case nor anyone else could accelerate the glacial enfranchisement of women at the university. While progressive educators like Arthur Verrall, his wife Margaret, and James

14 In addition to *Eumenides*, Verrall provided text and translation for all or part of 1887/1912's *Oedipus Tyrannus*, 1890's *Ion*, and 1894's *Iphigenia in Tauris*. Jebb edited *Ajax* for the first Greek play, and, like Jackson and Jackson's predecessor as Regius Chair Benjamin Kennedy, had been one of the first CGP committee members. As John Clark explains, the concept was that "a body of older men, carefully selected as likely to be useful in various ways—scholastic, archaeological, or dramatic—should be permanently enrolled" in the CGP committee (the rules, and Jebb's role in promoting the 1885 *Eumenides*, are elucidated in Elliot 1898, 156–7). Fully half of the committee members in 1885 were still part of it in 1906, including Oscar Browning, J. W. Clark, M. R. James, F. J. H. Jenkinson, A. Newton, J. E. Sandys, and Charles Waldstein (Verrall and Stanford 1906, iv–v).

Headlam's non-participation does not mean that he ignored the performances, or that others ignored his ability to contribute profoundly to our understanding of Aeschylus. In the run-up to the performance Headlam published a remarkable essay (1906) in which he famously connected the Furies' red cloaks to those of the metics in the Panathenaic procession, a proposal excitedly mentioned in the chief review of the production ("E.S.T." 1906, 138). Similarly, William Ridgeway, the only other contestant for the Regius chair not on the CGP committee, proposed that the asylum and trial of Orestes should be set at the Palladion instead of the Areopagus—which proposal is made after a direct invocation of the "splendid performance of the play at Cambridge" (1907, 163). Verrall's 1908 edition of *Eumenides*, which he considered a scholarly counterpart to the "acting edition" of 1885, may also be considered to be a product of the revival and demonstrates its ebullient effect on his scholarly program.

15 See, e.g., Easterling 1999, 29.

16 Alley 1982, 298.

Adam were teaching young women at Newnham and Girton in the 1880s, women did not become full members of the university until 1948 and Janet Case's distinction as a female actor in a CGP remained an anomaly until 1950.

### Laughing at Orestes, Voting with Athena

On the afternoon of 18 November 1906, less than a fortnight before the revival's debut, the Committee of the Amateur Dramatic Club met in the rooms of R. S. Durnford at King's College and were presented with a "skit on the 'Eumenides'" penned by Geoffrey Bulmer Tatham and George Walter Buckle; the Committee were unanimous in their approval, and "it was decided to produce it at the Smoking Concert with a strong cast."<sup>17</sup> (A smoking concert was an evening of light entertainment engineered chiefly by men from one college; several were held each term, and attendance was usually by invitation only and always restricted to men.) Because of the ADC's co-sponsorship, this smoker was held in the old ADC theatre on Park Street;<sup>18</sup> it was fixed for 7 December (two days after *Eumenides'* close) and would include three sequences: *A Reconciliation* (a one-act comedy by King's student and future architect Henry Stuart Goodhart-Rendel), five musical pieces and a dramatic recitation, and, finally, *The Newmenides: or, Why Orestes Left Home* (Tatham and Buckle 1906, referred to hereafter as *New*).

Since the concert took place at the very end of term there is no coverage of it in the *Cambridge Review* or any other university forum; smoking concerts, being relatively small events mounted purely for the diversion of an exclusive coterie, were seldom reviewed anyway. But, neither is there much material about the evening in the ADC's own archives, nor are there photographs of it in its otherwise rich photo album.<sup>19</sup> Of course several of the men involved were also part of *Eumenides*, and last-minute preparation seems to have been the understandable result: costumes were not decided upon until 2 December,

17 Cambridge, University Library, MS Add. 7675/1/7.

18 Hewison 1983, 21–45 discusses both the profusion of Edwardian smokers, farces, balls, and dinners into which a "one-off" topical production like Tatham and Buckle 1906 comfortably fitted, as well as the growing incorporation of themes of female matriculation and suffrage into the texts of student-written entertainments.

19 There are three extant typescripts of Tatham and Buckle 1906, all apparently identical: two of them are kept in Rare Books at CUL (Cam.b.906.6 and Cam.b.906.12); a third, formerly owned by M. R. James, is the source of the quotations in this essay (King's College Modern Archives, MRJ/B). The ADC photo album is in the University Library at MS Add. 7675/V/A/7.

for example, and there is no mention of sets or props apart from trivialities like a pail, broom, and penny trumpet mentioned in the text itself.<sup>20</sup> But the cast is known: Buckle himself portrayed Apollo, and Durnford was a Priestess of Athena's temple; F. C. S. Carey was Athena, A. F. Scholfield played Orestes, Justin Brooke was Clytemnestra, and C. T. Swift was a lone representative Fury (dubbed in this context "Furious Suffragettes"). A singularly interesting point is that Brooke had played the Priestess of Athena in *Eumenides*, and Carey and Scholfield were parodying their own formal performances of the previous week—and as the ADC minute-book summarizes, this self-referentiality was immensely appreciated:

If those present were anticipating a really excellent burlesque, they were apparently not disappointed, and, inasmuch as the "Eumenides" as performed at the New Theatre had only ceased two nights before, every point in the parody was thoroughly appreciated. The audience were enthusiastic. Messrs. Scholfield & Carey in their original parts (burlesqued) ensured the success of the play. They were wonderful, both in acting and appearance, and they were admirably supported by Mr. Buckle, looking more like Bacchus than Apollo, Mr. R. S. Durnford, who was quite excellent as the temple bedmaker, Mr. Swift, a very masculine suffragette, and Mr. Brooke, quite at home in the part of a ghost. Altogether it was universally agreed that the Smoking Concert had been one of the very best in recent years....<sup>21</sup>

Beyond these backstage glimpses we must infer from the text itself. *New* is a one-act verse parody of *Eumenides* in some 3800 words, requiring perhaps three quarters of an hour to perform, full of momentary riffs on a variety of matters rooted in Aeschylus' play but generally designed to satirize the contemporary women's suffrage movement. It is a verbally witty play, full of inventive rhymes and outrageous anachronisms: the CGP performance is identified

20 The play is not mentioned at all in the ADC memo book for 1905–06 (CUL MS Add. 7675/III/A/2). It is worth noting that Cam.b.906.12 does contain, partially obscured by a handwritten list of costumes for some of the cast ("Apollo: pumps, socks, suspenders"; "Athena: white & a pink sash"), a rough sketch of what may have been the basic set—a central stepped altar surmounted by what appears to be an *omphalos*. Archival photos of the 1906 *Eumenides* network at the CGP website (<http://www.cambridgegreekplay.com/plays/1906/eumenides>) suggest that the actual structure from the latter may have been re-used for the parody.

21 CUL MS Add.7675, entry for 7 Dec. 1906.

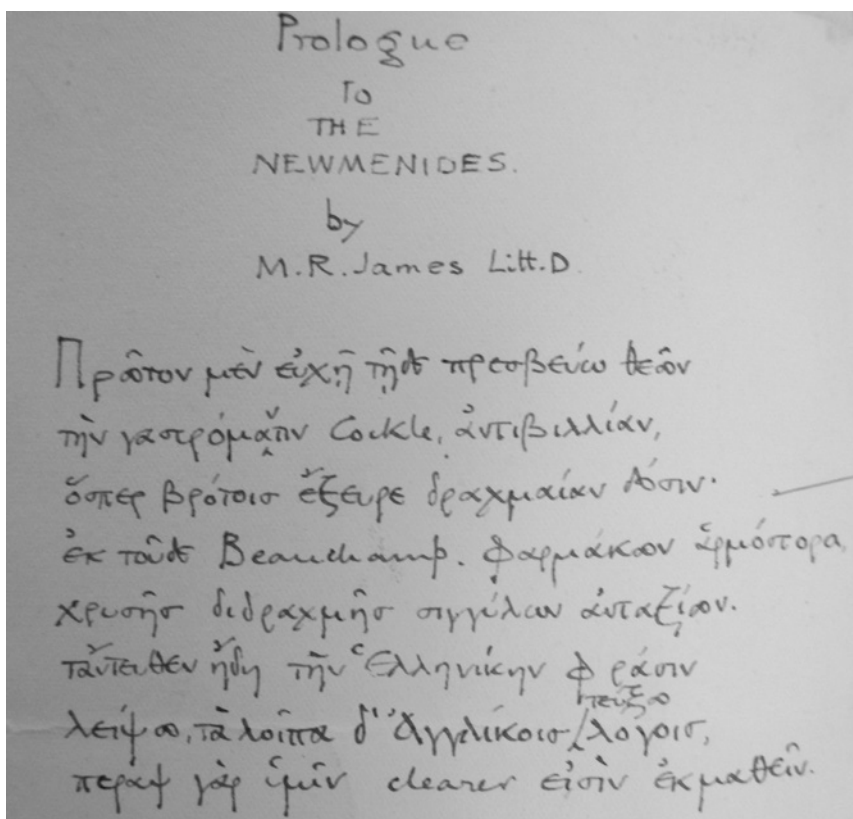


FIGURE 14.1 Handwritten note by M.R. James, preserved with the typescript of *New* (Camb.b.906.12).

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as its springboard even before the curtain rises through the device of an advertisement in neo-Koinē, contributed by M. R. James, designed to acknowledge the queasy transfer from Areopagus to Westminster by promoting Cockles' Anti-Bilious Pills and Beecham's Stomach Powders, the latter's slogan "Worth a Guinea a Box" transformed into drachmas (Fig. 14.1). The scullery jokes continue into the opening speech of the Priestess of Athena (here demoted to a charwoman), who laments the lack of Vinolia and Monkey Brand soaps to help keep her temple clean.

The domestic duties of women thus deftly defined, Orestes enters and laments his pursuit by the sister suffragettes of his dead mother:

My fatherland of Argos is much vexed  
 By women, wholly or in part unsexed,  
 Who wish for votes and hope by dint of clatter  
 To raise some interest about the matter.  
 Should clatter fail, for worse they are prepared:  
 To brave our trusty Myrmidons they've dared.  
 Such was my mother and this conduct shady  
 Was worse in her because she was a lady,  
 Both by her birth and also by her marriage:  
 My father Agamemnon kept his carriage.  
 But he, alas, kind worthy man is dead;  
 My mother's pranks dishonoured his gray head.  
 When of her wickedness he tried to tell her,  
 In wrath she hit at him with her umbrella,  
 And he expired. In death he looked so placid  
 I filled my mother's tea with prussic acid.  
 She just had time to put her new false hair on  
 Then joined him on the evening boat with Charon.  
 The crime was heinous, I do quite confess so.  
 But if it was, was her achievement less so?  
 For this I am pursued: her horrid mates  
 Press on me hard and now assault the gates;  
 Their clam'rous voice and terrible appearance  
 Seems to suggest the lack of much forbearance.<sup>22</sup>

Clytemnestra herself, coughing from the smoky air of the infernal subway that has brought her from Hades,<sup>23</sup> is introduced as a new type of the Hysterical Woman; indeed, condemnation of the heckling tactics to which suffragettes turned in 1905–06 (and the age of misrule which conservatives saw portended by their political agenda) moves the play beyond cheeky misogyny and provides an earnest satirical core. Witness this tour-de-force declaration of the

22 Tatham and Buckle 1906, 5–6.

23 The smoke repeatedly renders her monologue's word division spasmodic: "The worst of going by the Underground / Is the bad atmosphere: for business men / It may be handy, and the more so when / They rent a cottage on the upper Styx, / But for myself, I hate to be asphix / -iated. Phew! Now really, it's too bad!" (Tatham and Buckle 1906, 7).

Lead Fury, where suffragette outrages are proudly predicted in the clucking anapests of protest marchers:<sup>24</sup>

If a woman you vex with contempt of her sex,  
     you soon will have need of repentance.  
 You are all of you fools: you are playing with tools  
     which will bring you a very sharp sentence.  
 We don't care a jot for your masculine lot  
     with your old-fashioned claims of dominion.  
 If you thwart us you'll find what we do when inclined;  
     we will cause you to change your opinion.  
 If you dare to provoke, and forbid us to smoke,  
     or to vote with the rest at the polling,  
 I dare to foretell that the funeral bell  
     and the knell of your kingdom is tolling.  
 We will up and we'll smite and continue to fight,  
     till we not only vote but are members,  
 And then you will see what we women can be  
     when we try to rekindle the embers.  
 Of faction and strife which sometime were rife,  
     when the houses discussed education;  
 We will sit up all night, and in perilous flight  
     we will leave the affairs of the nation:  
 And the house will be filled with our chatter and thrilled  
     by the chaos in which we are swimmin',  
 Then won't there be fun when you're all of you under  
     a cabinet made up of women?  
 We will spend vast amounts and entrust the accounts  
     to one who has knowledge of cooking,  
 And a government clerk will remain without work  
     unless he is young and good-looking.  
 All the heads of the army will soon become barmy,  
     inventing new hats and pelisses,  
 We will humour our fancies and damn the finances,  
     nor care if the outfitter fleeces,  
 When this millennium, which I'm sketching, has come,

24 The same verse form—that of the nursery rhyme “The House that Jack Built”—was used in the anti-suffrage “House that Man Built” postcard series in ca. 1910; see Tickner 1988, 51, illus. 28. On the “types” of Hysterical Woman and Shrieking Sisterhood, see 192–205.



when you're left to your fate, and the reins of the  
state we've effectively cut, and the nation's gone fut,  
in fact and in short, when we've got our own way, to  
sum up in a word, there's the devil to pay.<sup>25</sup>

In his defense, Orestes makes the claim that the killing of his mother was a civic duty: her "new-fangled notions" "threatened to upset the state"; he later proudly exclaims "I'm glad I did it," "My ma was mad and so she had to die," and "I'd do the same on any other day, / Should the occasion offer."<sup>26</sup>

In order to reduce the unruly feminized discourse of the public dispute ("You'll see the struggle in the Daily Mail;<sup>27</sup> / 'Twas finer far than any winter sale"), the play presents a "Women Not Admitted" banner across the temple's vestibule. In logistical terms this helps explain why one lone Fury is present in the play, but it is strikingly symbolic of the varied attempts to regulate and diminish feminine voice in the suffrage debate—it is, in short, a moment in which the satire can be read as reinforcing the national rights debate in Edwardian Britain. The gendered disenfranchisement is reinforced when the Fury attempts to vote on Orestes' guilt but is thwarted by Athena: "Dear madam please remember that, as yet / No vote is granted to a suffragette. / This hell is not the ecclesia's crowded lobby; / Don't make a scene or else I'll call a bobby" (20–1). The reference is surely to the Houses of Parliament (via the Pnyx), the scene of aggressive protests by Emmeline Pankhurst and others, particularly during the General Election of 1906. Indeed, since satirical representations of suffragettes are generally recorded to have burgeoned in and after 1907, *Newt* may be of interest to social historians because it is slightly ahead of the curve.<sup>28</sup>

While it is unlikely that any women were in the audience of *Newt*, the *Eumenides* revival was certainly attended by an audience of both sexes—as Newnham student and future botanist Margaret R. Levyns recalled, "Another irksome rule [of college life] was that insisting that if one went out after dinner, one had to be back by eleven o'clock. On only one occasion in the year was this rule waived for the ordinary student. This was the occasion of the Greek Play, performed by members of the University in the Theatre in St. Andrew's

25 Tatham and Buckle 1906, 12.

26 Tatham and Buckle 1906, 15, 19.

27 In this regard we find that however conservative the Kingsmen's politics might have been, their acuity for neologisms was strong: "suffragette" is first attested by the OED in January of 1906, in the *Daily Mail*.

28 Tickner 1988, 151; see also Cowman 2007, 261–6.

Street.”<sup>29</sup> Thus the same core Aeschylean event—and the public discourse preceding and following it—was capable of spawning a second independent student play, *The Newmenides: With All Due Apologies to Aeschylus*, written by second-year Girton students M. D. M. Scott, G. H. M. Steele, and Mary Gwladys Jones (Scott et al. 1907, hereafter referred to as *New2*). It was performed at Girton on 9 February, 1907, just after the start of Lent term, with Jones as Orestes, N. B. Drummond as the Leader of the Furies, G. Steele as Apollo, and B. Batten as Mathema, “the presiding goddess of the Maths Tripos,” and with music by Dorothy Lindo Henry.<sup>30</sup> Nearly every second-year student at Girton seems to have participated, for the cast topped out at thirty; the play is also about a third longer than *New1*, having been accompanied only by a brief skit to comprise an entire evening’s entertainment.<sup>31</sup>

*New2* has none of the overt political aspirations or metrical *sprezzatura* of *New1*, but follows Aeschylus’ general plot more thoroughly and certainly outpaces *New1* in madcap enthusiasm. It belongs to the type of fanciful appropriations produced by keen students of every college, in which inside jokes inflect a received text for mutual commiseration; it is thus procedurally similar to the unpublished parody of the morality play *Everyman* written by the Newnham College Minor Poets in about 1906, in which the trembling Every Tripper (i.e., Every Tripos Student) goes to meet her Examiners after having bidden adieu to her guiding Virtuous Principles.<sup>32</sup> *New2* also removes the domestic transgressions of *Eumenides*, replacing a vengeful Clytemnestra with a neuter Ghost of Time. But its true distinctiveness comes in the window it provides into student attitudes toward the study of mathematics, then in the process of wholesale transformation: the play figures forth the death throes of the “Old” Mathematics Tripos, a reform vote for which was about to shift its focus away from narrow problem-solving and toward broader knowledge, as well as to provide greater institutionalized intellectual, emotional, and physical support to those preparing for the exam. Thus, in much the same way that the CGP *Eumenides* can be read in tandem with the Regius competition and *New1* with suffrage rhetoric,

29 Phillips 1979, 96.

30 The identities of many of the women involved are problematic for the historian because of the occultation of female surnames, but Steele became Mrs. Lane-Roberts; Drummond became Mrs. Walker; Lindo Henry became Mrs. Coburn. Among those who did not marry, Jones became an educational historian and Scott became headmistress of a girl’s school in Halifax.

31 Corroborative material about Scott et al. 1907 is as elusive as that about Tatham and Buckle 1906. Very rare copies of the published chapbook exist (e.g., in the Girton College Archives at GCRF 1/3/5), but the only external reference to the play we have been able to locate is its review in the *Girton Review* for Lent Term of 1907 (GCCP 2/1/2).

32 Extracted in Phillips 1979, 69–71; see also 56–7.

*New2*, written as the Tripos reform vote approached and performed the same weekend that its approval was announced, can also be effectively interpreted as a work of commentary on a community experiencing profound change.<sup>33</sup>

We should, therefore, not be surprised to find in *New2* that Athena has been transformed into “Mathema, the presiding goddess of the Maths Tripos,” whose vote to liberate Orestes is her swan song as a divinity—she acknowledges that she will no longer be needed at the university because of the New College Order:

As ye all know great Cambridge hath ordained  
That henceforth all the famous old distinctions  
Of Senior Wranglers and the Optimes  
Shall all be swept into oblivion.  
Thence, as it follows that I shall no more  
Be needed here within the 'Varsity,  
For I—a goddess—cannot bear the change  
Which mortal men have made within my Trip....<sup>34</sup>

Her evanescence is firmly attached to the physical effects of studying for the Tripos—the various games and sports that developed informally to provide balance in the lives of the young men whose daily regimen would otherwise be put through the wringer. But the key word here is *balance*—Orestes is presented to the audience as an intellectually apathetic but athletically- and socially-inclined young man who has murdered Time at the urging of Apollo (“the Spirit of Games”) and is now, as his exams approach, being pursued by Furies personifying his scorned textbooks:

We are the books whom you have ever scorned,  
Paley the Great, no ghost as you have there,<sup>35</sup>  
Lucian and Livy, not the miserable cribs

33 *Cambridge Review*, 7 Feb. 1907, 218. Debate over the utility of the Tripos had begun in earnest in the 1870s, as dissatisfaction with the image of a mathematician as a purely intellectual figure grew; see Warwick 2003, 176–226, who points directly at athleticism as a key issue in the study of math by women: “Apart from the fact that women were believed to lack the emotional stability and intellectual power to compete with men, it was considered highly inappropriate for women to participate in the competitive physical games that necessarily accompanied hard study” (217–18). Forsyth 1935 is an enlightening personal memoir of the unreformed Tripos.

34 Scott et al. 1907, 21–2. Wranglers and Optimes are score distinctions of the Old Tripos.

35 William Paley’s *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (1785), *Evidences of Christianity* (1794), and *Natural Theology* (1802) were still Cambridge Standards at the time. “Paley’s

That you were wont to use as classic works;  
 Euclid and Permutations such as you  
 Have no conception of. These are we,  
 By killing Time you made us useless too,  
 So we have now resolved to spend our days  
 In never-ceasing efforts to avenge  
 The undeserved contempt 'neath which we rage.<sup>36</sup>

This Orestes is also a bit of a craven, secreting himself from the Furies behind male privilege and rule—an “Engaged” sign on his study door, not unlike the “Men Only” stricture used in *Newt*. That means he can’t leave for tea or dinner, though, and his hunger and thirst eventually drive him from his sanctuary to the Senate House via the expediency of climbing down bedsheets from the window. In his final appeal to Mathema he emphasizes that his impetus to kill Time was a response to the depredations wrought by prolonged study of a lovely female Senior Wrangler:

Her form was bowed with ceaseless, cankering care,  
 Her face, once comely, beautiful and fair,  
 Had, by attention to the Mathematics,  
 Transformed her into cubes and hydrostatics.  
 She was a Senior Wrangler, and based her fame  
 On this, that she had never played a game,  
 Never had made a friend, no office held  
 In hockey, swimming, tennis, nor cricket field,  
 Never attended at the Big Debate,  
 Labelled these functions too degenerate,  
 Scorned the Spontaneous Speaking Society,  
 And the O.C. of political variety.  
 All this, Mathema, was the work of Time,  
 Who taught her falsely that it was a crime  
 To waste a minute on the many things  
 Which make life joyous and pleasure bring.  
 And I, to see her spoilt, withered before her age,  
 Was filled with boundless and unreasoning rage.  
 Urged by Apollo, the god of games and play,  
 I swore by all the gods, that I would slay

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Ghost” is the nickname for the openly-published crib sheets of his work which habitually supplanted the books themselves; see Phillips 1979, 100.

36 Scott et al. 1907, 12.

Old Time, by wasting every hour,  
 Minute, and second within my human power.  
 How I've succeeded, Spirit great, you know.<sup>37</sup>

Mathema's deciding vote allows Orestes to squeak by with the lowest possible passing score, earning him the notorious Wooden Spoon distinction; the Furies undergo transfigurations into "Mental and Moral Science" books, which Orestes promises to learn from (albeit not to the exclusion of his beloved sports).

*New2* thus rests upon an interesting paradox. As is rather famously known, the question of women's mathematical ability was (or should have been) quelled when Philippa Fawcett bested her male competition in the Tripos of 1890; though she outscored them all, the collegiate structure did not allow a female to be awarded the title of Senior Wrangler and thus Fawcett remains to this day a prominent "asterisk" in Cambridge mathematical achievement.<sup>38</sup> While the women of *New2* were beneficiaries of her pioneering achievement and added to it themselves (three students, Dorothy Lindo Henry, Marjorie Long, and K. Field all sat for the Tripos in 1908, and Long's score was equal to that of Fourth Wrangler),<sup>39</sup> they were systematically excluded from the physical diversions which had developed in male student culture to prevent total self-abnegation. While the play complains about the dangers to women of undiverted study, and advances the proven abilities of women and wistfully laments the loss of the goddess of the Tripos, it is surprisingly uncritical of male privilege and the curricular changes that would continue to allow it to flourish. This focus on the humbling and re-fashioning of Orestes in *New2* validates the "new-men" pun in ways that the conservative content of *New1* does not.

It should be clear to our readers that in all three of these performances the matter of voting, of the participatory signaling of one's (dis)approbation on a disputed matter, has attracted us most forcefully. The concept is pleasantly concordant with Aeschylus' design of Athena as the abolitionist of oath-based ordeal and the establisher of justice based on civic trial. While the student parodies depict public decision-making most directly, Walter Headlam's struggle to fit in with his professional colleagues reinforces the maxim that stage and player can take many forms. The student articulations of meritocracy fit so well alongside Headlam's story because they respond to the same social pressures felt by young people undergoing the college experience; neither can escape

37 Scott et al. 1907, 19.

38 On Fawcett, see Jones 2009 and Gould 2001.

39 *Educational Times*, 1 Aug. 1908, 327. Long went on to become Assistant in Mathematics at Bedford College (Jones 2009, 162).

*Eumenides*' inevitable tableau of the judgment of Athena with its bedrock interrogation of gendered superiority. *New1*, with its subtitle "Why Orestes Left Home," resonates compellingly with the prevailing understanding of the undergraduate university experience as a transition from domestic childhood to the public world of Men—a "masculine retreat from the domestic sphere,"<sup>40</sup> one which would be ruined by the presence of women. Its lone Fury dons no transformative scarlet robe: Athena, agreeing that females are less capable of reason, interprets the very metaphorical composition of a Fury as an extension of gendered emotion ("Where a woman's judge / As in this case, no logic makes her budge / From her opinion"), and the play closes on a reductive misogynist zinger—provided by Apollo, not Athena—a domestic object-lesson meant to delight its all-male audience: "Never wed a suffragette."<sup>41</sup> By contrast, in *New2* Mathema's generous tolerance of Orestes' youthful faithlessness recognizes that "Customs so dear and sacred to my heart / Are now abolished,"<sup>42</sup> yet nonetheless promotes forward momentum in the spirit of democratically-approved curricular revision.

That all three events can so profitably be read in terms of the 1906 *Eumenides* staging is, as we said at the outset of this essay, a function of particular times and places. As social beings we often figure forth dissent and defiance by adapting or imitating received art forms—and while many of these acts can remain visible as decades pass, such an intense clustering of archivally-preserved responses seems to us peculiarly characteristic of early twentieth-century academic environments. Increased attention to performances of ancient Greek drama in this "suitable soil" will likely reveal many more similar constellations of reception and production, informing us to ever greater degrees about the activities (to say nothing of the constructions of age, gender, ethnicity, and professionalism) of the broad social milieu which has always defined living theatre.

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40 Deslandes 2005, 28.

41 Tatham and Buckle 1906, 16 and 23.

42 Scott et al. 1907, 23.

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# The Broadhead Hypothesis: Did Aeschylus Perform Word Repetition in *Persians*?

*Stratos E. Constantinidis*

## Introduction

This chapter considers the reception of Aeschylus' *Persians* by readers and audiences and their responses to his work based on English translations that reduce or eliminate word repetition. The response of H. D. Broadhead to the Greek text of *Persians* becomes the cornerstone of this study because he supposed that Aeschylus and his ancient audience were much less sensitive to repetition than modern readers and audiences. My inquiry into this matter hypothesizes that word repetition in *Persians* is, for the most part, intentional and serves dramaturgical (i.e., compositional and performative) goals by clarifying, linking, or emphasizing the states of mind of the characters and the changes in their situations. The data collected from the responses of Aristophanes, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Dio Chrysostom, and Michael Psellus to the dramaturgy of an unspecified (for the most part) number of Aeschylus' plays, are applied to Aeschylus' *Persians*. The analysis shows that, in *Persians*, Aeschylus did not repeat the seven recurrent "flaws" mentioned by his critics; and he used word repetition appropriately in the speech of his Persian characters so as to increase the impact of a scene on his readers and audiences.

A corollary of the analysis suggests that Aeschylus created a soundscape for *Persians* that was not solely based on the choral songs, the music, and the stage sound effects. It was also based on the word repetition, the rhythms, the diction, and the accents that he wrote into the Greek speech of his Persian characters. When translators limit or eliminate word repetition from their translations of this play, they prevent readers (including performers) and, subsequently, audiences from being able to sense the subtle states of mind or attitudes of the characters and from being able to detect the initial spark of a developing conflict. It would seem that word repetition played a vital role in the composition of *Persians*, and Aeschylus (along with the second actor and the twelve members of the chorus) performed word repetition, as is indicated by the repetition patterns of adjectives, interjections, proper names, place

names, and verbs. A translator cannot erase many of these word repetitions from his or her translation of *Persians* without nullifying the force and effect of Aeschylus' lines. By excluding some or all of Aeschylus' repetitions, translators impact the way this play is received by modern readers and audiences. Broadhead's supposition about the sensitivity of modern audiences to word repetition was tested on American audiences in 2009 with a translation that did not avoid repetition. His "sup-position" ("hypo-thesis" in Greek) was, in this instance, invalidated because 88.06% of the respondents in the audience felt that word repetition in *Persians* was justified and did not bother them.

### Is There a Problem?

In *The Persae of Aeschylus* (1960), H. D. Broadhead hypothesized that ancient "Greek dramatists were much less sensitive to repetition than we moderns."<sup>1</sup> By "we moderns," he meant textual critics like himself, but also literary critics, translators, and, presumably, the readers and/or audiences of Aeschylus' *Persians* in translation. Broadhead did not try to find out the reasons why Aeschylus used word repetition in *Persians*. Consequently, he did not deem it necessary to either qualify or quantify his assumption about word repetition in *Persians*. The goal of this chapter is to quantify and qualify Broadhead's supposition, and, if need be, correct it.

The English translations of *Persians* published from 1777 to the present are a testimony to the fact that their translators (and perhaps some of their readers and audiences) have been "sensitive to repetition" (in Broadhead's sense) and, accordingly, limited or entirely eliminated from their translations of *Persians* Aeschylus' choice to repeat certain Greek words.<sup>2</sup> Thanks to the intervention of these translators, the English-language readers and audiences of

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1 Broadhead 1960, 60 n. 1.

2 The translators of the following 27 translations available in print either reduced or entirely omitted word repetition from their translations of *Persians*: Robert Potter 1777, William Palin 1829; Anonymous at Cambridge 1840, Lewis Campbell 1890, William Cranston Lawton 1892, E. S. Crooke 1893, E. H. Pluntre 1900, G. M. Cookson 1906, Arthur S. Way 1906, E. D. A. Morshead 1908, C. E. S. Headlam 1909, Herbert Weir Smyth 1922, C. B. Armstrong 1927, T. G. Tucker 1935, Gilbert Murray 1939, Seth G. Benardete 1956, Philip H. Vellacott 1961, Anthony J. Podlecki 1970, Janet Lembke and C. J. Herrington 1981, Frederic Raphael and Kenneth McLeish 1991, Michael Ewans 1996, Edith Hall 1996, Carl R. Mueller 2002, Ellen McLaughlin 2005, Christopher Collard 2008, Alan H. Sommerstein 2008, and Aaron Poochigian 2011.

their translations have been spared from (but also deprived of) the effect that Aeschylus' word repetition has in the surviving Greek text.

It is impossible to trace the effect that Aeschylus' word repetition had on Greek-language readers and audiences in Athens in 472 BCE when it was spoken by actors impersonating Persian characters such as Xerxes, Darius, the messenger, the queen, and the twelve councilmen. The earliest comments on the impact of Aeschylus' language and dramaturgy on audiences survive in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, a comedy that was performed close to 405 BCE, i.e., fifty years after Aeschylus' death. The characters in *Frogs* are prone to exaggeration for comic effect and, in the spirit of comedy, they find fault with Aeschylus' playwriting by listing seven recurrent "flaws" taken from an unspecified number of his plays. Aeschylus repeatedly 1. thrusts the characters into the dramatic action without properly introducing the plot and the characters to the audience (945–7);<sup>3</sup> 2. keeps some of the characters (especially female ones like Niove) needlessly idle and silent during a scene, depriving them of an equal opportunity and equal time to express their thoughts through speech (910–13; 948–52);<sup>4</sup> 3. makes a character say the same thing by using two different expressions such as "come back and return" (1153–4) and "listen and hear" (1172–4);<sup>5</sup> 4. writes lousy songs because his lyrics and tunes are repetitious (1249–50);<sup>6</sup> 5. employs words befitting an unrelenting grandiloquent talker who has an incontinent, unbridled mouth that cannot be out-talked (837–9);<sup>7</sup> 6. uses loosely-hanging-on words with meanings that do not add up easily (927–30);<sup>8</sup> and 7. in general, yokes heavy words (940),<sup>9</sup> or ox-size<sup>10</sup>

3 "εἴτ' οὐκ ἐλήρουν ... εὐθύς τοῦ δράματος" (945–47).

4 "πρώτιστα μὲν γὰρ ἓνα τιν' ἂν καθίσειν ἐγκαλύψας ... γρύζοντας οὐδὲ τουτί" (910–3); "ἔπειτ' ἀπὸ τῶν πρώτων ἐπῶν ... δημοκρατικὸν γὰρ ἔδρων" (948–52).

5 "ἦκω γὰρ εἰς γῆν τήνδε καὶ κατέρχομαι" (1153–4); "τύμβου δ' ἐπ' ὄχθῃ ... ταῦτόν δν σαφέστατα" (1172–4).

6 "καὶ μὴν ἔχω γ' οἷς αὐτὸν ἀποδείξω κακὸν μελοποιὸν ὄντα καὶ ποιοῦντα ταῦτ' αἰεὶ" (1249–50).

7 "αὐθαδέστομον, ἔχοντ' ἀχάλινον, ἀκρατές, ἀπύλωτον στόμα, ἀπεριλάλητον, κομποφακελορήμονα" (837–9).

8 "καὶ ῥήμαθ' ἱππόκρημνα, ἃ ξυμβαλεῖν οὐ ῥάδι' ἦν" (929–30). Most translators prefer to translate "neck-breaking words," following the definition which they find in the Liddell and Scott's Greek English Lexicon. However, the compound word "ἱππόκρημνα" does not mean "neck-breaking" and the infinitive form of the verb "ξυμβαλεῖν" calls for a different translation for Aeschylus' steep, cliff-hanging words.

9 "ῥημάτων ἐπαχθῶν" (940).

10 The Watchman in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* says: "About the other [matters], though, I'll keep quiet; a big bullock / stands on my tongue" (36–7).

words (as many as twelve in a row in *Niobe*) sometimes in the middle of his plays (923–4).<sup>11</sup>

Some of these criticisms about Aeschylus' way of writing resurfaced and were repeated both during the Middle Ages and the modern era by such critics as Michael Psellus in the eleventh century and H. D. Broadhead in the twentieth century. During the revival of classical learning in the Byzantine era, for instance, a Constantinopolitan reader of the intellectual caliber of Psellus (ca. 1017–1078) had very little to say about Aeschylus' "deeper meanings" and "most elegant" language; and, whenever he stopped repeating clichés—which echoed opinions initially expressed by Aristophanes and were reiterated by literary critics like Dionysius of Halicarnassus (ca. 60–7 BCE)<sup>12</sup> and Dio Chrysostom (ca. 40–120 CE),<sup>13</sup>—Psellus became evasive:

So, Soph[ocles, on the one hand,] and [surely] Aeschylus have deeper meanings and a more reverent arrangement of words, and even though [they are] not al[w]ays graceful nor [have] well-wrought rhythms, nevertheless [are] more reverent on the whole and, so to speak, most elegant. A[eschylus at any rate] in *Prometheus Bound* briefly deviates from

11 “καῖπειτ’ ἐπειδὴ ταῦτα ληρήσειε καὶ τὸ δράμα ἤδη μεσοίη, ῥήματ’ ἀν βόρεια δώδεκ’ εἶπεν” (923–4).

12 Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *The Critical Essays I & II*. 2 vols, translated by Stephen Usher (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1974 and 1985), I: 386–7, II: 169–71. In the discourse on Demosthenes (39) and in the discourse on literary composition (22), Dionysius of Halicarnassus lists the features and effects of “austere harmony” (αὐστηρᾶς ἁρμονίας), that is the simple and plain composition that Aeschylus applied to tragedy, Pindar to lyric poetry, Empedocles to natural philosophy, and Thucydides to history: “it does not use many conjunctions or articles consistently, but sometimes even less than necessary; it does not keep the words on the same cases for long, but changes [case] constantly; it disdains speech [patterns] that conform to either what has preceded or what will follow; the pieces are held together uncommonly and individually and not according to the understanding and intent of most people” (39); see also 22 for a longer list.

13 Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses 1–80*. 5 vols. Translated by J. W. Cohoon and H. Lamar Crosby (Boston: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, 1932–1951), IV: 338–53. In the 52nd discourse on Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, Dio Chrysostom discusses how each dealt with the same story, the theft of Philoctetes' bow: “because both the magnanimity and venerability of Aeschylus [’ characters], and moreover the waywardness of [their] thought and speech, seemed proper for tragedy and for the old manners of the heroes, without anything being elaborate or chatty or low” (4–5). For Dio Chrysostom, “Sophocles, on the other hand, seems to stand in the middle between the two, because he has neither the waywardness and simplicity of Aeschylus nor the precision and the acridity and the politicking of Euripides” (15).

his familiar usage and, indulging [too much] in pure iambs and in little words which fawn over the sense of hearing, [touch]ed upon the subject most neatly; as for the rest of his dramatic subjects, especially [in the one] where he impersonates the people of Darius, he is altogether terrific and, for someone [like me] who has not been initiated, so to speak, in the divine revelatory festival, it is hard to put it in words, let alone to form a judgment about him. On the other hand, Euripides, who composed eighty or more dramas, is always delightful and graceful, not only in the graces of words, but also in the passions themselves; and he often drove the Athenians to the greatest number of tears by writing timely plays; because in their mind they saw fiction as reality.

PSELLUS 54–68<sup>14</sup>

None of the Greek plays that have survived from the classical period is more “timely” (in Psellus’ sense) than Aeschylus’ *Persians*. Its fiction is based on a reality which the Athenians in the audience in 472 BCE had experienced eight years earlier. However, this chapter is not concerned with historical reality. It examines the facts of fiction which may or may not create the illusion of reality for readers and audiences. In *Frogs*, for instance, Aeschylus is accused of adorning his plays with the sort of “realistic” images (such as those of animals) that are depicted on Median [i.e., “Persian”] tapestries (*Frogs* 938). Aeschylus defends his choices of imagery and refers to his own tragedy, *Persians*, as an “excellent work” (ἔργον ἄριστον)—“excellent” in the sense of being his “best and noblest” play (1027). Interestingly, however, Aeschylus does not actually say that *Persians* is the best and noblest work that he “has written” (γράφας). Instead, he says that it is the best and noblest work that he “has adorned” (κοσμήσας). Aristophanes’ word choice here reminds the Athenians that Aeschylus wove images (usually a string of words) into his play in a manner similar to that of the Persian weavers who adorned their tapestries with the images of animals that Aristophanes mentioned earlier in *Frogs*.

Certain words (mainly nouns) in *Persians* stand out thanks to their thematic significance rather than to sheer recurrence. For instance, the sea-wave (90) is used only once to suggest that the Persian force is as unstoppable and undefeatable as a rogue wave or a tsunami that drowns everything in its path. The eagle (205) is also used once, even though it is a powerful symbol of Persian monotheistic imperialism which, according to the queen, had been

14 The translations of the quoted excerpts in this chapter are mine even when I quote bilingual editions that have been translated by others.

unexpectedly attacked by a hawk, a smaller bird of prey, foreshadowing the misadventure of the imperial Persian force with the much smaller Greek force. Other noun-based images, such as the swarm of bees (128–9) and the school of yellow-fin tuna (424) are also used once to suggest how the enormous number of Persian soldiers moved swiftly and fought in crowded formations. And so are the noun-based agricultural images which are equally vivid and varied—from the “flower of the Persian land” (59) that was sent to the killing fields of Greece, to the “harvest of tears” (822) that brings to a close the theme of hubris and punishment.

### Is There a Hypothesis?

Unintentional word repetition is usually regarded as a symptom of an author's sloppy style, lack of skill, insufficient vocabulary, or idiosyncratic mannerisms. What if word repetition in Aeschylus' *Persians* is not the result of poor style, starved skill, limited vocabulary, or bad speech habits? What if word repetition in *Persians* is intended to emphasize, to clarify, or to link characters, thoughts, actions, and situations? Generally speaking, purposeful word repetition is an effective device when the author has a good sense of which word to repeat and how often. The more an author complicates his plots and characters, the more he needs word repetition (and other devices) to keep readers and audiences on the “right” track. Word repetition can, for instance, refresh their memory by connecting the “dots” of the dramatic action; can draw their attention to a developing situation; and can establish a pattern that links characters together.

In view of the above, the H. D. Broadhead hypothesis could be modified and restated in a nutshell as follows: If Broadhead had bothered to quantify and qualify his earlier statement (i.e., that Aeschylus was less sensitive to word repetition than we moderns), then he would have discovered that word repetition in *Persians* serves a significant dramaturgical function: i.e., it helps audiences to read the mind and mood of a troubled character<sup>15</sup> and to sense the sparks of

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15 People who are under emotional and/or physical stress, tend to repeat specific words or phrases. This is not in reference to Sigmund Freud's “repetition compulsion” in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) because his *Wiederholungszwang* theory is about behavior that is much broader than the repetition of a few words or phrases. This is in reference to the repetition that causes disfluencies in the speech of both the native-speakers and the foreign-speakers of a language. For details, see Laura Thomas and Kevin LaBar. 2005. “Emotional Arousal Enhances Word Repetition Priming,” *Cognition and Emotion* 19/7: 1027–47. For a more general discussion, see W. Chafe 1979. “The Flow of Thought and the

a developing conflict. When translators limit or eliminate word repetition from their translations of this play, they prevent readers, performers, and subsequently, audiences from sensing the subtle states of mind or attitudes of some characters and from detecting the initial sparks of a developing conflict. If there is evidence that word repetition is central in the composition of *Persians*, then did Aeschylus perform word repetition? And if he did, what kinds of word repetition can a translator of *Persians* not afford to avoid repeating?

### Are There Any Data for Analysis?

The text of *Persians* is a goldmine of information and a prime site for data mining when it is read in the context of Euripides' allegations in *Frogs*. Aeschylus, as one of the characters in *Frogs*, gets upset and feels indignant (1006) when his artistic choices are challenged by Euripides;<sup>16</sup> and rightly so, because, upon closer inspection, none of the seven alleged "flaws" apply to *Persians* and, perhaps, to his other plays that have not survived.

1 Aeschylus made sure that the twelve councilmen introduce themselves and their main problems to the audience immediately (1–11) and that they inform the audience about the expected entrance of the four individual characters so as to arouse curiosity about their anticipated actions—once for the queen (150–4), once for the messenger (246–8), eight times for Darius (220–5, 521–4, 619–22, 628–30, 640–3, 649–51, 657–66, 671–2), and five times for Xerxes (299–301, 529–31, 735–7, 829–38, 846–51). This type of repetition is self-evident and self-explanatory.

2 Aeschylus gave the queen "equal" opportunity and "equal" time to speak; and her relatively long "silence" is as eloquent as her conversation both in the scene with the messenger and in the scene with Darius' ghost. In the scene with the messenger she explains that she remained silent between lines 249 and 289 for two reasons: she was shocked by the bad news and felt wretched because the reported disaster was so overwhelming that it left her speechless (290–1). In the necromancy scene she stands dumbfounded between lines 759 and 844 because Darius expresses a negative attitude towards inept imperial heirs such as Xerxes and Mardus, who was assassinated (774–7). While the queen is listening to the dialogue between Darius and the twelve councilmen, she senses that Xerxes, her son, is now "in harm's way" (851). In short, Aeschylus

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Flow of Language." In *Syntax and Semantics: 12. Discourse and Syntax*, edited by T. Givón, 159–81. New York: Academic Press.

16 "θυμούμαι μὲν τῇ ξυντυχίᾳ, καὶ μου τὰ σπλάχν' ἀγανακτεῖ" (1006).

gives the Persians—husbands and wives, masters and subjects—“equal” time to talk as dictated by the egalitarian principles advocated by Euripides in *Frogs*. This twice-repeated silence of the queen is indicative that Aeschylus knew that physical action on stage can be as eloquent as words when it is properly framed.

3 Aeschylus used repetition (as defined by Aristophanes and Euripides in *Frogs*) on three separate occasions. However, the type of repetition that Aeschylus used is semantic amplification rather than word repetition, and he deployed it sparingly and effectively when he wanted to disclose the emotional or mental state of a character—such as the messenger, the queen, and Xerxes. Each character rephrases an idea by saying the same thing in a different way with modifiers that are synonymous. Compare, for instance, the queen’s statement that “The report is clear and *remains unchallenged* on this; there is *no dissent*” (*Persians* 738) to Hamlet’s “*windy suspiration of forc’d breathing*” (*Hamlet* 11.79). The Persian queen repeats herself because she is as distressed and disappointed with Darius, her husband, as the Danish prince is distressed and disappointed with Gertrude, his mother. The messenger and Xerxes repeat themselves, too. They both suffer from a post-traumatic stress disorder of sorts, but express their anguish differently. The messenger tells the twelve councilmen about the “*suffering* and great *distress*” (509) of the Persian soldiers,<sup>17</sup> while Xerxes is drawing their attention to “this *arrow-holder* ... this *treasure box for arrows*” (1020–2).<sup>18</sup> These semantic amplifications (“repetitions”) give actors performative opportunities to disclose the state of mind of the characters whom they impersonate.

4 Aeschylus wrote songs of remarkable variety in *Persians* that debunk Euripides’ “proof” that Aeschylus is a “bad songwriter” (1249–50)<sup>19</sup> for allegedly composing the same “thing” over and over again. In *Frogs*, this charge surprised everyone because everyone knew that Aeschylus “composed more songs of the finest quality than anyone else to this day” (1251–6),<sup>20</sup> and no one could imagine how Euripides would make his case against Aeschylus persuasively. Euripides had boasted that he would accomplish his goal by demonstrating that he could trim all of Aeschylus’ tunes and lyrics down to one single beat,<sup>21</sup> which supposedly would sound like “flattie-thrashie-flattie-thrash”

17 “μόγισ πολλῷ πόνῳ” (509).

18 “τόνδε τ’ οἰστοδέγμονα ... θησαυρὸν βελέεσσιν” (1020–2).

19 “αὐτὸν ἀποδείξω κακὸν μελοποιὸν ὄντα” (*Ran.* 1249–50).

20 “τί ποτε πρῶγμα γενήσεται; ... ἀνδρὶ τῷ πολὺ πλείστα δὴ καὶ κάλλιστα μέλη ποιήσαντι τῶν μέχρι νυνί” (1251–6).

21 “εἰς ἓν γὰρ αὐτοῦ πάντα τὰ μέλη ξυντεμῶ” (*Ran.*, 1262).



(1285).<sup>22</sup> Euripides' quotes from Aeschylus' plays are hilarious, but not persuasive. Inadvertently, Euripides' quotes make a helpful point: Aeschylus wrote lyrics and tunes (i.e., melodies) that were so simple and so memorable that, fifty years after his death, the Athenian actors and audiences of Aristophanes' time could easily remember and sing some of them in the theatre; and, more importantly, could tell the difference between an Aeschylean tune and its Euripidean parody.

5 Aeschylus avoided "grandiloquence" in *Persians* except in three brief occasions: a) when the twelve councilmen boast about Xerxes and his imperial troops (21–60, 73–99); b) when they salute the queen (150–8);<sup>23</sup> and c) when Darius' ghost deliberately gives a spin to historic events to defend his imperial dynasty and its God-given right to rule undemocratically (749–51, 759–81).<sup>24</sup> However, on the first occasion, the councilmen's boastful magniloquence is immediately undercut by their concern about the wives and parents of the departed soldiers and the duplicity of Fallacy (61–4 and 100–39); on the second occasion, their grandiloquence is undermined by the Queen's down-to-earth attitude and immediate concern (159–65) about the wealth and wellbeing of her home; and on the third occasion, Darius' grandiloquence is deflated when he admits that Xerxes has endangered the empire like no one had ever done before (781–6). None of the Persian characters' talk is "unrelenting," "incontinent," or "unbridled" except, perhaps, that of Xerxes and the twelve councilmen at the end when they begin to weep for the calamity and tear their robes (1038–77).

6 Aeschylus refrained from using "loosely-hanging-on words that do not add up easily" except when he wanted to create solecisms and wordplays. In

22 "φλάττο-θράττο-φλάττο-θράτ" (*Ran.*, 1285).

23 "But, here comes the mother of the king, / [and] my queen, though, / charging ahead with eyes as shiny as [the eyes] of the gods. / I am bowing down; and I will speak to her, though, / using all the greetings [and] titles that are due to her. [*To the Queen*] Hello supreme queen of the tightly cinched Persian women, / elderly mother of Xerxes, and wife of Darius. Bedmate of a Persian god, / on the one hand, and, on the other, mother of a god born to you, / [and destined to rule], unless some ancient deity has now turned against the army" (150–8).

24 "Although he [i.e., Xerxes] was a mortal, he thought, imprudently, that he could control / all of the gods, including Poseidon. How can it not be anything / other than a mental illness that affected my child?" (749–51); "[So,] it was because of them that he took on this endeavor, / the greatest to date, wanting to be remembered forever; / he drained this very city of Susa of fall guys as has never happened before / since the ruling Zeus bestowed [on us] this honor, / that the entire sheep-breeding Asia be governed by one man, / wielding the guiding scepter" (759–64).

such cases the “steep” (ἰππόκρημνος) and slippery meaning of a word (or two) gives readers and audiences the impression that these words are disconnected from their proper semantic, syntactic, or grammatical context and are hanging together “loosely.” In *Persians*, for instance, all of the characters are Persian, but they speak in Greek and sometimes are not aware of a double entendre that Aeschylus puts into their mouth every now and then, beginning with the very first line of the play.<sup>25</sup> Here is how Aeschylus made the twelve Persian councilmen present themselves to the Athenian audience: “Τάδε μὲν Περσῶν τῶν οἰχομένων / Ἑλλάδ’ ἐς αἶαν πιστὰ καλεῖται” (1–2). These ten words *appear* to be disconnected and hanging together “loosely” because they do not follow the “proper” Greek word order. The “proper” word order is “Τάδε μὲν καλεῖται πιστὰ τῶν Περσῶν οἰχομένων ἐς αἶαν Ἑλλάδ[ος]” and could be translated into “proper” English as follows: “This indeed [is what] is called the Security [Council] of the Persians who departed for the [main]land<sup>26</sup> of Greece.” But the word order in the “proper” English translation above is *not* the word order that Aeschylus chose for these foreign-speakers to introduce themselves to their Athenian audience in Greek. The Greek word order that he chose is this: “This<sup>27</sup> indeed of the Persians of the departed ones of Greece for the land Security is called.” Meter consideration notwithstanding, the “improper” word order aurally illustrates that the twelve councilmen are foreign-speakers (βαρβαρόφωνοι). The semantic context of the above Greek sentence in *Persians* is further complicated by a double entendre. The past participle *toon oihomenoon* (τῶν οἰχομένων), which means both “the departed ones” and “those who departed,” refers to the Persian soldiers who either “departed” from Persia to fight the Greeks (literal meaning) or “departed” from the world of the living because they were killed while fighting the Greeks (figurative meaning). As it turns out in the play, many of the Persian soldiers (and their allies) departed from both their homeland and the world of the living.

7 Aeschylus used a relatively small number of “heavy,” “ox-size” words. The surviving Greek text of *Persians* in M has a total of 2,693 words (not counting the repetitions of these words). Only 127 (i.e., 4.71%) of these words are polysyllabic (i.e., have five or more syllables).<sup>28</sup> Of these 127 “heavy,” “ox-size”

25 This line is not exactly a case of ἀσύνδετον σχῆμα (unconnected form), the well-known rhetorical device.

26 i.e., not the islands of Greece.

27 And, of course, the word τάδε (these) has been rendered as “this” (τόδε) in English.

28 The 127 compound words with five or more syllables in *Persians* are the following: ἀβροδιαίτων (41), ἀβροχίτωνας (543), ἀγανόρειος (1026), Ἀθαμαντίδος (70), Αἰγυπτογενής (35), αἵματοσφαγής (816), αἰτησόμεθα (625), ἀχορεστοτάτοις (545), ἀμμεμείζεται (1052),

words, 110 are compound words, and their per-character distribution is proportionate to the number of lines spoken by each character: Chorus (55 words), Messenger (30 words), Queen (20 words), Darius' ghost (20 words), and Xerxes (7 words). These numbers indicate that the use of polysyllabic words with five or more syllables cannot be linked to any particular character's speech habits.<sup>29</sup>

ἀνακαλείσθε (621), ἀνδροπλήθεια (235), ἀντηλάλαξε (390), ἀντισηκῶσαι (437), ἀπεφαινόμεθ' (858–859), ἀποπεμφάμενα (138), ἀποσφαλείσιν (392), ἀποτρόποισι (203), Ἀριόμαρδος (38, 321, 968), Ἀσιατογενής (12), ἀτεκμαρτοτάτης (910), ἀφικόμεσθ' (493), Ἀχελώιδες (868), ἀχρημάτοισι (167), γυναικοπληθής (123–124), Δαρειογενής (6, 145), δασμοφοροῦσιν (586), δεσποσύνοισιν (587), διαμυδαλέοις (539), διαπεπρόθηται (714), διαπεπραγμένα (260), διαπεπραγμένου (517), διασπαράσσει (195), διεκπερῶμεν (435), δυσκλεεστάτῳ (444), ἐγκατέσκηψεν (514), εἰσακούομεν (565), ἐκικλήσκειτο (654–5), ἐκκενούμενα (549), ἐκπεπληγμένη (290), ἐκπιδύεται (815), ἐκπρεπεστάτα (184), ἐκσφῶϊατο (451), ἐκσωσοίατο (360), ἐκτελευτήσιν (741), ἐλαιόφυτος (882–3), ἐλειοβάται (39), ἐλευθεροῦτε (403), ἐληλαμένα (872), ἐνδυναστεύσας (691), ἐνεζόμενοι (140), ἐξανέστραπται (812), ἐξαπέφθειραν (464), ἐξειργασμένοις (525), ἐξειργασμένον (759), ἐξεκείνωσεν (761), ἐπανερόμαν (973), ἐπανθορόντες (359), ἐπεκύρσαμεν (853), ἐπεξεχώρει (401), ἐπευφημεῖτε (620), ἐπιστενάζετε (727), ἐπορθιάζε (1050), ἐπορσύνοντο (375), ἐσπανίσμεθ' (1024), ἐστρατηλάτει (717), εὐθυνήριον (764), εὐνατήριον (160), εὐρυπόροιο (100), ἐφορμηθέντες (462), ἐφορμαίνοντα (208), ἡμερολεγδὸν (63), ἡπειρογενές (42), θαλασσόπληκτον (307), θεοβλαβούνθ' (831), Ἰάονιον (898), ἰθαγενής (306), ἱππιάννακτας (996), ἱπποχάρμης (29), ἱπποχάρμας (97), κακομέλετον (937), κακοφάτιδα (936), κἀνακωκύσας (468), κἀπεστράτευστα (780), κἀπιδεσπόζει (241), κἀπικουρίας (731), κατερείκόμεναι (538), κρεοκοποῦσι (463), κρυσταλλοπῆγα (501), κυανώπιδες (559), μακροβίος (262), Μαριανδυνού (938), μαχαιροφόρον (56), μελικτήρια (610), μετερρῦθμιζε (747), μυριόνταρχος (314), μυριοταγὸν (993), νησιώτιδος (390), νουθετήμασιν (830), οἰστοδέγμονα (1020), ὀρθιάζοντες (687), ὀρσολοπείται (10), ὅτοτοτοτοῖ (1043, 1051), πανωλέθροισιν (562), παρηγορεῖτε (530), πατρωνύμιον (146), πελειοθρέμμονα (309), περσονομούνται (585), ποιμανόριον (74–5), πολεμοφθόροισιν (653), πολιαινομένης (101–2), πολισσονόμου (852–3), Σαλαμινιάσι (965), στημορραγοῦσι (836), στοιχηγοροῖην (430), τάπιτίμια (823), τοξοδάμαντες (26, 926), τοσουτάριμον (432), τροχλάτοισιν (1001), ὑπαντιάζε (834), ὑπαντιάζειν (850), ὑπεκσφῶριεν (453), ὑπερσπανισμένους (489), ὑπερφρονήσας (825), ὑπηγνιάζε (407), ὑπομνηνῆσκεις (<989>), χρυσεοστόλους (159), ψακοστρόφον (767). However, since none of the above polysyllabic words are excessively long and difficult for a Greek to pronounce, it is possible that Euripides meant that Aeschylus used words that had a "heavy," "ox-size" semantic dimension.

- 29 The per-character distribution of the polysyllabic words with five or more syllables in *Persians* is as follows: CHORUS: 55 words: (6, 10, 12, 26, 29, 35, 38, 39, 41, 42, 56, 63, 70, 74–75, 97, 100, 101–2, 123–, 138, 140, 145, 146, 262, 539, 543, 545, 549, 559, 562, 565, 585, 586, 587, 625, 653, 654–5, 852–3, 853, 858–9, 868, 872, 882–3, 898, 926, 936, 937, 938, 968, 973, 993, 996, 1001, 1043, 1051, 1052). MESSENGER: 30 words: (260, 306, 307, 309, 314, 321, 359, 360, 375, 390, 390, 392, 401, 403, 407, 430, 432, 435, 437, 444, 451, 453, 462, 463, 464, 468, 489, 493, 501, 514). QUEEN: 20 words: (159, 160, 167, 184, 195, 203, 208, 235, 241, 290, 517, 525, 530, 538, 610, 620, 621, 714, 717, 850). DARIUS' GHOST: 20 words: (687, 691, 727, 731, 741, 747,

Only two of the polysyllabic words—an exclamation (ὄτοτοτοτοῖ) and a noun (τοξοδάμαντες)—are repeated twice; and only one of the polysyllabic words—a proper name (Ἀριόμαρδος)—is repeated three times.

In short, *Persians* provides evidence that Aeschylus knew how to introduce a character into the dramatic action; how to use speech and silence selectively and effectively; how to use word repetition appropriately so as to increase the impact of a scene on his readers and audiences; how to write simple songs with memorable lyrics and tunes; how to play up and play down grandiloquence for contrast and dramatic effect; how to restrain incontinent, unbridled speeches unless a developing situation called for them; how to make foreign speakers use sentences which seemingly have “loosely-hanging-on” words whose meanings do not add up easily; and how to be frugal with heavy ox-size words that could compromise articulatory ease and clarity of meaning. Aeschylus, in *Frogs*, humorously defends his artistic and linguistic choices because he is made to believe in Aristophanes’ deliberately cliché opinion, i.e., the high status of the tragic characters ought to be reflected not only in their superior clothing but also in their superb use of language and portentous thoughts (*Frogs* 1058–61).<sup>30</sup> A careful reader of *Persians* will find that, contrary to Aristophanes’ exaggerations, the Greek of the Persian characters is forceful (not breathless), measured (not random) and marvelous (not familiar).

C. E. S. Headlam was one of the first translators to recognize that the characters in *Persians* use words, rhythms, and diction that are different from those of the characters in the other Aeschylean plays. The major images of Persian imperialism such as the eagle, the yoke, the bow, the chariot, and the sea-wave (tsunami) that Aeschylus wove into his text are easy to see in a translation. However, what is not easy to see in a translation is that Aeschylus also “adorned” his text with sounds that his Athenian audience could associate with the Persians. Did the frequent use of phonemes such as [α/a] and [π/p] create the fleeting impression that a character spoke Greek with a foreign “accent”? In *Persians*, Aeschylus uses 387 words that begin with the vowel “a” (plus 171 repetitions) and 408 words that begin with the consonant “p” (plus 235 repetitions). The Persian characters use words and rhythms that echo their experience with the colonial Greeks of Asia Minor who had been subjugated several decades before Darius and Xerxes crossed the sea to attack the independent Greek city-states on both the islands and the mainland. Headlam wrote that

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759, 761, 764, 767, 780, 812, 815, 816, 823, 825, 830, 831, 834, 836). XERXES: 7 words: (910, 965, <989>, 1020, 1024, 1026, 1050).

30 “ἀλλ’, ὦ κακόδαιμον, ἀνάγκη μεγάλων γνωμῶν καὶ διανοιῶν ἴσα καὶ τὰ ῥήματα τίττειν ... καὶ γὰρ τοῖς ἱματίοις ἡμῶν χρώνται πολὺ σεμνοτέροισιν” (1058–61).

"Aeschylus makes his Persians speak in an archaic-sounding Ionic style, the Greek of Asia."<sup>31</sup>

Headlam would have been more accurate if he had said that Aeschylus *occasionally* made his Persians use words and rhythms reminiscent of the idioms spoken by the colonial Greeks of his time whose city-states formed a necklace (for the Greeks) or a noose (for the Persians) around the coastal lands of Asia Minor. Anyway, it is not known if the Athenian actors who impersonated the four Persian characters and the twelve councilmen in 472 BCE tried to speak Greek with a Persian accent. When he could help it, Aeschylus preferred alliteration to random repetition because, through alliteration, he could orchestrate the sound of vowels and consonants for meaningful dramatic effect. In *Persians*, he showed a marked preference for alliteration with alpha, a Greek vowel. His alliteration of choice did not go unnoticed by the Athenian audiences. Euripides in *Frogs* 838 parodied it by claiming that Aeschylus had an "unbridled, incontinent, gateless mouth" (ἀχάλινον ἀκρατές ἀπύλωτον στόμα).<sup>32</sup>

Psellus in Constantinople in the eleventh century noticed that Euripides was adept in making the foreign characters in his plays speak Greek with a foreign accent:

To foreign[ize, when necessary, the lang]uage, he imitated the same [speech] so as to sound both extremely Greek-like and exactly sol[ecistic-like; because] wherever the Atti[c]<sup>33</sup> language [is spoken] with foreign accents, it sounds solecistic. It occurs where it deviates from what is proper [Greek] and is produced by the power of speech rather than by the precision of the poetry.

PSELLUS 90–94

What Psellus said about Euripides could also be said about Aeschylus. The Persian characters speak perfectly intelligible Greek in the text of M, but, apparently they do so with a Persian accent which makes their Greek sound different from what was proper Greek in Athens and in the Greek towns of Asia Minor. Their Persian accent colors the way in which they pronounce Greek vowels (such as "a"/"α" and "e"/"ε"), consonants (such as "th" / "δ" or "θ," "b"/"β,"

31 Headlam 1909, vi.

32 In Greek this phrase, which repeats six alphas, sounds like that: "ahalinon, akrates, apyloton stoma." It is sandwiched between two additional words that contain two "alphas" each and begin with an "alpha": "afthadostomon" (ἀφθαδόστομον) and "aperiletton" (ἀπεριλάλητον).

33 I.e., the Greek of Attica.

“s”/“ς” and “z”/“ζ”), and diphthongs (such as “ai/αι,” “ei/ει,” “au/αυ,” and “eu/ευ”). For example, the monosyllabic word “*though*” (δ’ or δὲ) was probably dentalized by the Persians and was pronounced “*de*” (ντέ) in Greek.<sup>34</sup> Therefore it could subsequently be pronounced “*dough*” (*though*) in the English translations and performances. The dentalization of tiny monosyllabic words, such as “*though*” (δὲ), in *Persians* is not an insignificant matter to be brushed aside and ignored mainly because “*though*” (δὲ) is repeated 197 times. It is the most frequently repeated word in *Persians*, and it plays a dominant role in the soundscape of *Persians*; and yet, it has also been the most frequently omitted word from the English translations of *Persians* since 1777.

Translators commonly avoid translating the monosyllabic Greek words that are frequently repeated in *Persians*. Repetitive words like “δ’” or δὲ” (“*though* or *although*”),<sup>35</sup> “τ’ or θ’ or τέ,” (“*especially*”), “καί” (“*and*”), “γάρ” (“*because*”), and “μὲν” (“*on the one hand*”) are discarded for being redundant even though this type of repetition is revealing a character’s reasoning and attitude. The repetition of some of these words allows readers, performers, and, subsequently, audiences to sense a character’s state of mind that affects his/her communication with the other characters and the direction of the action. In some instances, repetition is key for understanding how a line, a dialogue, a song, or a dance was (or could be) performed.

The repetition of the same conjunctive particle in a scene of *Persians* sometimes functions like a stage direction. When, for example, the chorus leader informs the other councilmen that the queen is approaching, he says: “But, here comes the mother of the king, / charging ahead with a glow in her eyes equal to the gods, / *though* [only] my queen; I’m bowing down; / and I’ll talk to her / using all the [key]words, *though*, that are due to her” (150–4).<sup>36</sup> What he says is as good as a stage direction which identifies an entering character and describes the character’s manner of entry. However, what he says is nuanced by the repetition of the word “δὲ” (“*though*”). The first “δ’” (“*though* [only] my

34 For a comparable rendition of the accents, speech patterns, and way of thinking of the Greeks who lived in Asia Minor in modern times under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, see *Babel* (1836), a comedy by Dimitrios Hatziaslanis (pen name “Byzantius”): Βυζάντιος, *Η Βαβυλωνία*. Α’ και Β’ edition by Spyros Evangelatos (Athens: Hermes, 1990).

35 When δ’ or δὲ are not discarded as redundant, it is difficult for a translator to reproduce this type of repetition in English by only using “*though*” or “*although*” in all contexts and at all times. The same applies to τ’, θ’, τέ, καί, γάρ, and μὲν.

36 “ἀλλ’ ἥδε θεῶν ἴσον ὀφθαλμοῖς / φάος ὀρμάται μήτηρ βασιλέως, / βασιλεία δ’ ἐμή· προσπίτνω· / καὶ προσφθόγγους δὲ χρεῶν αὐτὴν / πάντας μύθοισι προσσυνδᾶν” (150–4).

queen”) reveals how he feels about the queen and the imperial claims to divinity. The second “δέ” (using all the [key]words, *though*) reveals that he will address her in the manner that is expected of him. Indirectly, however, he is also advising the other councilmen to model their behavior towards the queen after him. Can it be that he and the other councilmen are not pleased to see the queen who cuts short their walk toward the “ancient roof” (στέγος ἀρχαῖον) when she arrives, coming straight from the gold-trimmed house and, more specifically, the imperial nuptial chamber she once shared with Darius?<sup>37</sup> The particle “δέ” denotes motion towards something frequently with an adversarial intent. It has been rendered into English as “though,” “whereas,” “nonetheless,” “on the other hand,” and so on. In *Persians*, it reveals an attitude in a speaker’s mind which often reflects objection, opposition, or supposition.

Repeated conjunctive particles can function as signposts that mark each character’s vacillating attitudes and the treacherous quicksand of the ever-shifting dramatic action. By paying attention to such repetitive conjunctions, readers can draw inferences about a character’s behavior and the stage action around them. For instance, the conjunction “γάρ” (“because”) is repeated sixty times in *Persians* and reveals how a character reasons and argues. Is the repetition of “γάρ” one of the queen’s speech mannerisms or is it a device of a greater dramaturgical significance? The queen uses it eight times (168, 169, 172, 211, 239, 291, 713, and 851) throughout the play. But why did Aeschylus make her repeat it three times within five lines (168–72) in the beginning of the play?

The queen says: “[Just] *because* [our] wealth is truly beyond reproach, [that doesn’t allay my] fear, though, for [the apple of my] eye;<sup>38</sup> / *because* I regard the master’s presence as the [evil] eye [amulet] of the house. / Therefore, Persians, trusty elders, since that is the way things are, / be my councilors on this case; / *because* everything rests on your careful counseling to me” (168–72).<sup>39</sup> The first “because” (168) introduces her syllogism about the preservation of the imperial wealth and the wellbeing of her son. The second “because” (169) stresses how important Xerxes’ presence is for the defense of their house (οἶκος) and family wealth or well-being against ill-wishers. The third “because” (172) appeases and/or flatters the councilmen for their anticipated “careful counseling.”

37 For a recent discussion of the setting, see Seaford 2012, 207.

38 i.e., Xerxes, her son, the real treasure of her household.

39 “Ἔστι γάρ πλούτος γ’ ἀμεμφής, ἀμφὶ δ’ ὀφθαλμῷ φόβος· ὅμμα γάρ δόμων νομίζω δεσπότην παρουσίαν. / Πρὸς τὰδ’, ὡς οὕτως ἐχόντων τῶνδε, σύμβουλοι λόγου / τοῦδε μοι γένεσθε, Πέρσαι, γηραλέα πιστώματα· πάντα γάρ τὰ κέδν’ ἐν ὑμῖν ἐστί μοι βουλευόμενα” (168–72).

The councilmen's response to the queen is equally revealing. Their leader chooses his words carefully as he is diplomatically trying to allay her fears about his and the other councilmen's ability or disposition to give her careful counseling (as if they had failed to give sound advice in the past). He says: "Know this well, queen of this land; you don't need to ask *twice* for / anything that is in our power to *guide*<sup>40</sup> you with either word or action; / *because* we are *well-disposed* to be councilors on any matter when you call on us" (173–5).<sup>41</sup> His "because" reveals his reasoning, but it also echoes (or parodies) the queen's earlier repetitive use of this conjunction, letting the audience know that he and the other councilmen share a guarded attitude toward the queen. Persian queens had power and they used it.

Such repetitive uses of words can help the readers of *Persians* to see the sparks of conflict that are ignited very early in the dramatic action of this play. When translators avoid translating word repetition, they also conceal from their readers the attitudes (states of mind) of the Persian characters and/or the initial sparks of a developing conflict. When word repetition in the Greek text is reduced or eliminated from its translation, the performers (as readers) are deprived of the subtle attitudes of the characters they have been cast to impersonate. Consequently, they remain clueless about the conflicts that lurk behind Aeschylus' choice to repeat certain words in Greek. Any translator's stage directions that are based on inferences drawn from word repetitions such as the above could assist perceptive directors and performers to navigate through the subtext of Aeschylus' *Persians*.

It is helpful to observe how word repetition is reduced through attrition in the existing English translations of *Persians*. Most resistant to attrition is the repetition of nouns. Noun repetitions with thematic significance are those of the chariot (46, 84, 190) which symbolizes the speed with which the Persian troops travel and strike; the yoke (50, 72, 196, 594) which emblemizes subjugation of both people and continents; and the bow (26, 30, 55, 86, 147, 278, 239, 460, 556, 926), which in various compound forms, illustrates how well-trained the Persians are to do battle from a distance.<sup>42</sup> Less resistant to attrition is the repetition of adjectives. The degree to which translators reduce adjective

40 Or, better, "to lead you" because Aeschylus uses the verb "to lead" (ἡγεῖσθαι). When did the twelve councilmen "misguide" or "mislead" the members of the imperial family with poor advice?

41 "Εὖ τόδ' ἴσθι, γῆς ἀνασσα τῆσδε, μή σε δις φράσαι / μήτ' ἔπος μήτ' ἔργον ὦν ἂν δύναμις ἡγεῖσθαι θέλῃ· / εὐμενεῖς γάρ ὄντας ἡμᾶς τῶνδε συμβούλους καλεῖς" (173–5).

42 Kennedy 2013, 64–88.



Translators	Line 3	Line 9	Line 45	Line 53
<i>Bernadette</i>	Golden	of gold	golden	golden
<i>Podlecki</i>	laden with gold	gold-laden	golden	rich in gold
<i>Lembke-Herrington</i>	gold winning	blazoned in gold	gold laden	gold-proud
<i>Hall</i>	rich in gold	gold-bedecked	manifold gold	rich in gold
<i>Collard</i>	great wealth of gold	many men*	all its gold	all its gold
<i>Poochigian</i>	gold-glittering	gold-glittering	gold-glittering	gold-glittering

\* Christopher Collard chose to translate the emendation “πολύανδρου” instead of “πολύχρυσου” on line 9.

FIGURE 15.1 Attrition of one adjective repetition in five of six translations.

repetition varies as it is shown by a random sample of six translations of *Persians* (Fig. 15.1) from six different decades: Seth Bernadette (1956), Anthony Podlecki (1970), Lembke-Herrington (1980), Edith Hall (1996), Christopher Collard (2008), and Aaron Poochigian (2011).

The adjective “πολύχρυσος” (poly-chrysos) is a compound adjective and it literally means “very-golden.” It is repeated four times in *Persians* to describe three different things: “temples” (3), “armies” (9), and “cities” (45, 53). The repetition of the adjective was eliminated entirely in the Podlecki translation and the Lembke-Herrington translation because each translator used four different adjectival expressions. The repetition of the adjective was reduced by 75% in the Hall translation and the Collard translation because each translator used three different adjectival expressions. The repetition of the adjective was reduced by 50% in the Bernadette translation because the translator used two different adjectival expressions. The repetition of the adjective was not reduced at all in the Poochigian translation because the translator used the same adjectival expression four times. The readers of Aeschylus’ *Persians* in translation can get as close to the meaning of the Greek text and its soundscape as the translator is capable or willing to take them.<sup>43</sup>

43 Unlike Homer’s epics, Aeschylus’ plays are not recognized as orally composed works and the occurrence of word repetition for metrical and other reasons in his works is not considered to be compositionally significant. Under the established scholarly paradigm, Aeschylus was a playwright who first wrote the text of *Persians* and then staged it at the Theatre of Dionysus in 472 BCE—not the other way around. The surviving text

The repetition of interjections is even less resistant to attrition than the repetition of adjectives. No word in *Persians* expresses the emotional state of a character more directly and more clearly than an exclamation. In *Persians* Aeschylus used a total of twenty-six interjections,<sup>44</sup> and repeated them for a total of seventy-five times. All twenty-six interjections were meaningful (not inarticulate<sup>45</sup> and incoherent) sounds to the Greeks in 472 BCE. The number of repetitions and their level of intensity cued the audience about a character's mental and emotional state, while affecting the meaning of what a character said or did at the time. Most of the twenty-six interjections express pain, sorrow, or despair. Their verbal, paraverbal and kinetic aspects do not have exact equivalents in English. Only three of the twenty-six interjections (πόποι, ποποῖ, and ῥμοῖ) are not repeated in *Persians*. The remaining twenty-three interjections are repeated from two to twenty-one times. However, none of these interjections are repeated more than six times, except for one (ῶ).

Interjections and their number of repetitions are usually reduced or eliminated in the translations of *Persians* for five basic reasons: 1 the meaning and intensity of some interjections in *Persians* is indeterminable (e.g., How is ὅτοτοῖ different from τοτοῖ?); 2 the cultural identity and vocal value of some interjections is vague (e.g., Are οῖ and οῖ Greek interjections made to sound

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of *Persians* is regarded as an expression of Aeschylus as a writer, not of Aeschylus as a performer. The possibility that Aeschylus as a performer (together with the second actor and a twelve-member chorus) created and memorized the dialogue and the songs during improvisational rehearsals along the principles of the Homeric oral tradition opens the door to a phonocentric model. After all, Aeschylus was composing for the theatre when "writing" was not prevalent and "books" were not easily accessible. What if a scribe (hired by Aeschylus and/or Pericles, the producer) simply recorded the dialogue and the songs of the performers as they were perfected and committed to memory during rehearsals? A phonocentric model, if it ever emerges, will emphasize that Aeschylus was a performer who composed the vocal and visual counterpart of the written text of *Persians* which has survived in medieval copies.

- 44 The 26 interjections in *Persians* are listed here in alphabetical order and in order of intensity: αἰαῖ (257, 283, 331, 433); αἰαῖ αἰαῖ (673, 929, 1039); ἐή ἐή (977); ἦέ (569, 577, 651, 655); ἦ ἦ (1004, 1075, 1076); ἰώ (909); ἰώ ἰώ (974, 987, 1004, 1005, 1070, 1074); ἰωᾶ (1071, 1072); ὀᾶ (117, 122, 570, 573, 578, 581); οῖ (445, 517, 1003, 1045, 1053); οῖ (663, 671); οἰοῖ (932); οἰοῖοῖ (955, 967); οἰοῖ οἰοῖ (1067); ὅτοτοῖ (918); ὅτοτοτοῖ (268, 274); ὅτοτοτοτοῖ (1043, 1051); παπαῖ (1032); παπαῖ παπαῖ (1031); πόποι (852); ποποῖ (550); τοτοῖ (551); φεῦ (285, 568, 576, 725, 739); ῶ (155, 231, 249, 250, 284, 353, 402, 472, 515, 518, 532, 619, 674, 681, 692, 709, 731, 733, 832, 845, 852); ῶ (985); ῥμοῖ (253).
- 45 Some translators "normalize" the text of their translations by sacrificing Aeschylus' juxtapositions, compressions, repetitions, clichés, commonplace expressions, and "inarticulate [sic] exclamations" as Christopher Collard did.

Persian or Persian interjections made to sound Greek?); 3 the qualitative difference between phonemically similar interjections is fuzzy (e.g., Is the difference between *πόποι* and *ποποί* for ancient Athenians similar to that between *πόπο* and *ποπό* for modern Athenians?); 4 the English “equivalent” of a Greek interjection is different in terms of kind and degree both linguistically and culturally (e.g., Is the Greek “ὦ” similar with the English “oh”?);<sup>46</sup> and 5 the modern English-language methods of acting are different from the ancient Greek-language methods of performance. Those translators such as Janet Lembke and John Herrington (1981) who removed all exclamations from their translations of *Persians* did not help solve the problem of translating any of the twenty-six interjections. And so did translators like Edith Hall (1996) who ingeniously transliterated (instead of translating) the twenty-six interjections and their repetitions.

Name repetition (proper names and place names) is usually reduced, but it is never eliminated. Aeschylus included seventy place names in *Persians*. However, he repeated only nineteen of them from two to fifty-one times.<sup>47</sup> He also listed the names of fifty Persian leaders who participated in the invasion of Greece. Of these fifty marines, however, he repeated only twelve names from two to three times.<sup>48</sup> He also mentioned nine emperors, but he repeated only

46 The Greek exclamation “ὦ” can mean either “hello” (when it is used as a form of address with a noun in the vocative case) or “oh” (when it is used to express joy or surprise). Rarely, it can also mean “come” when it is used to prompt or to warn. When it is used to express pain or sorrow, the accents over it change. The English exclamation “oh” usually expresses sadness, disappointment, admiration, joy, excitement, surprise, or wonder; it does not adequately cover all of the other meanings of the Greek “ὦ.”

47 The nineteen place names that are repeated from two to fifty-one times in *Persians* are: Agbatana (16, 535, 961), Asia (12, 57, 61, 73, 249, 270, 549, 584, 763, 929), Athens (231, 285, 286, 348, 355, 474, 716, 824, 976), Bactria (306, 318, 732), Boeotia (482, 806), Bosporus (723, 746), Cissium (17, 120), Doris (183, 486, 817), Egypt (35, 311), Greece (2, 50, 70, 186, 234, 271, 334, 338, 351, 355, 358, 362, 369, 384, 388, 393, 402, 409, 417, 452, 455, 758, 790, 796, 809, 824, 875, 900), Hellespont Strait (722, 745, 779), Ionia (178, 563, 771, 898, 950, 951, 1012, 1025), Lydia (41, 770), Mysia (52, 322, 1054), Nile River (34, 311), Persia (1, 15, 23, 59, 91, 95, 117, 135, 140, 155, 157, 171, 182, 247, 250, 252, 255, 258, 267, 280, 288, 332, 335, 406, 412, 434, 441, 473, 512, 514, 516, 532, 541, 597, 623, 644, 646, 655, 682, 693, 711, 714, 789, 912, 924, 978, 986, 1013, 1016, [1070], 1074), Salamis (273, 284, 447, 893, 965), Sardis (45, 321), Sousa (16, 119, 535, 557, 644, 730, 761), Strymon River (497, 867), and Thrace (509, 566, 870).

48 The twelve names repeated from two to three times in *Persians* are: Arcteus (44, 312), Ariomardus (38, 321, 968), Arsames (37, 308), Artaphrenes (21, 776, [778]), Artembares (29, 302, 972), Lilaëus (308, 970), Masistres (30, 971), Megabates (22, 982), Pharandakes (31, 958), Pharnuchus (313, 967), Sousiscanes (34, 960), and Tharybis (513, 323, 971).

the names of three emperors from three to seventeen times.<sup>49</sup> Indicatively, Artaphrenes (unlike Darius and Xerxes) is only a notable “reference” in the play without any stage presence. However, the repetition of his name by the twelve councilmen in the beginning of the play and by Darius’ ghost during the necromancy scene, as the laudable assassin of an inept emperor, is deliberate and, therefore, significant. Aeschylus also mentions eleven deities but repeats the names of only six of them from two to twelve times.<sup>50</sup> Name repetition is not haphazard in *Persians*. Aeschylus uses the narrative technique of “ring composition” with a dark sense of tragic irony.

For example, when the twelve councilmen proudly list the leading participants in Xerxes’ expeditionary force in the beginning of the play, their mood is anxious anticipation. For the twelve councilmen’s list of names, Aeschylus transliterated seventeen foreign proper names into Greek.<sup>51</sup> In the middle of the play, the messenger, who arrives from the battlefield, painfully lists those officers in Xerxes’ expeditionary force who were killed in action. Upon hearing the breaking news of the defeat and the disaster, the mood of the twelve councilmen changes into despair. For the messenger’s list of names, Aeschylus repeats five names (Arcteus, Ariomardus, Arsames, Artembares, and Tharybis) from the twelve councilmen’s list, and then adds another thirteen proper names. At the end of the play, Xerxes, who responds to questions asked by the twelve councilmen, remorsefully lists key personnel whom he had to leave behind dead and unburied. The mood of the twelve councilmen changes again as they feel shame and anger toward Xerxes who has failed them, the other Persians, and their allies. For Xerxes’ list of names, Aeschylus repeats nine names (Ariomardus, Artembares, Lilaëus, Masistres, Pharnuchus, Sousiscanes, Tharybis, Megabates and his son Seisamas); and then he adds another fourteen names.<sup>52</sup> These twenty-three Persians on Xerxes’ list seem to be members of

49 The names of the three emperors repeated from three to seventeen times in *Persians* are: Artaphrenes (21, 776, [778]), Darius I (6, 145, 156, 160, 164, 198, 221, 244, 554, 621, 651, 663, 671, 713, 787, 857), and Xerxes (5, 144, 156, 199, 299, 341, 356, 465, 550, 551, 552, 718, 734, 754, 782, 832, 923).

50 The names of the six deities repeated from two to twelve times in *Persians* are: Aidoneus (649, 650), Apollo (206, 232), Ares (84, 952), Zeus (532, 740, 762, 827, 915), Ate (112, 1007), and a nameless demon (158, 345, 354, 472, 515, 581, 601, 602, 725, 845, 911, 942).

51 However, only five of these names are recognizable today (Ariomardus, Arsames, Artaphrenes, Artembares, and Megabates).

52 These additional fourteen names in *Persians* are: Alpistus, who is Batanochus’ son, Anchares (994), Arsakes (995), Cegdadatas (997), Diaexis (995), Hystaechmas (972), Lythimnas (997), Memphis (971), Oibares (983), Parthus (983), Seualkis (969), Tolmus (998), and Xanthis (994).

his personal security. It is the job of the twelve councilmen on his Security Council to determine to what extent Xerxes is exposed and vulnerable. These twelve experienced politicians and war veterans know *exactly* who the loyal friends of Xerxes are, and which names they should bring up during their inquiry in order to assess the damage to Xerxes' security. Aeschylus' reasons for deliberately repeating some of the proper names and place names disappear when some of these names and their repetitions are reduced or eliminated by the translators and/or the adapters of *Persians*.

The repetition of verbs is less resistant to attrition than the repetition of proper names and place names. However, the attrition of verbs is accompanied by an unexpected occurrence—i.e., the concomitant addition of words in the translation that have no counterparts in the Greek sentence to which the verb belongs. For instance, the verb “πέμπειν” (“to dispatch”) is used ten times in various forms in *Persians*: πέμπει (54, 450), πέμπειν (222), πέμπε (624), πέμπσας (630), πέμπετε (645), πεμπαστάν (980), and πέμψω (939, 939, 1077). However, the same Greek verb has been vicariously translated into English as “assigned,” “conduct,” “dispatched,” “escort,” “follow,” “lead,” “join,” “pour,” “release,” “send,” etc. This long array of synonyms reduces the repetition of this verb in many translations. This reduction comes with an assortment of added English words. These added words do not exist in the Greek sentence to which the verb belongs. The last line of *Persians*, “πέμψω τοί σε δυσθρόοις γόοις” (1077), consists of five Greek words and one of them is the verb “to dispatch.” This five-word sentence does not include any of the twenty-two English words which have been added to it by some of the twenty-seven translators of *Persians* mentioned earlier. These added English words are: “ay,” “yes,” “broken,” “play,” “home,” “minstrelsy,” “stricken,” “lips,” “sounds,” “come,” “now,” “our,” “lord,” “master,” “palace,” “painful,” “oh,” “Xerxes,” “for,” “lead,” “and,” “take me.”

What Aeschylus says with or without repetition in *Persians* makes perfect sense in Greek even though each line is written to express a Persian viewpoint and a Persian way of thinking, if not a Persian manner of speech. William Arrowsmith in his preface to Aeschylus' *Persians*, translated by Janet Lembke and C. J. Harrington, wrote that in some translations Aeschylus' songs and conversations sound like “monstrous gibberish,” while in some other translations the overall effect is “as though one madman had translated another.”<sup>53</sup> A more constructive approach to the efforts of each translator to translate Aeschylus' Greek is that of William Palin who wrote: “I shall not, like some others, attempt to establish my own merit by denying all merit to my predecessors: whatever

53 Arrowsmith, “Preface.” In Lembke and Harrington, 1981: xi.

their faults, there is not one of them who has not done some good, and who is not, therefore, entitled to something better than raillery and abuse.”<sup>54</sup>

In defense of those translators who did not observe word repetition in Aeschylus’ *Persians*, it should be acknowledged that word repetition in *Persians* rarely draws the immediate attention of the readers and audiences to itself. Aeschylus does not use anaphoric repetition in *Persians* like Shakespeare does in *King John* (“*Mad world! Mad kings! Mad composition!*” 2.1.561); or epistrophic repetition like Shakespeare does in *The Tempest* (“Hourly joys be still upon *you!* Juno sings blessings on *you!*” 4.1.108–109); or rhetorical repetition like Shakespeare does in *Julius Caesar* (“*Brutus is an honorable man!*” 3.2.83, 87, 94, 99); or epizeuctic repetition like Shakespeare does in *Hamlet* (“*Words, words, words!*” 2.2.191).

However, word repetition in *Persians* cannot be erased from a translation without nullifying the force and the effect of Aeschylus’ lines. This condition becomes evident when one considers one more type of word repetition in *Persians*. A word is repeated within twelve lines of its first occurrence. These repetitions have an echo effect which is meaningfully related to a character’s concern and/or to one of the themes (motifs) of *Persians*. For example, the queen repeats the word “devastation” (συνφορά) twice within six lines. “Tell me,” she asks the messenger, “what is this *devastation* that you say has fallen on the army” (439); and, after she is told, she confirms the messenger’s feelings: “How wretched I feel,” she says, “about this harmful *devastation!*” (445). Aeschylus repeats 172 words in this manner in *Persians*. Thirty of them are used in more than one form.

### Is There a Conclusion?

The above data indicate that most of the word repetitions in Aeschylus’ *Persians* are not random instances of a sloppy writing style. They are instead deliberate choices intended to enhance the meaning of a dramatic situation. It would seem that Aeschylus and his audiences were sensitive to word repetition in a sense that H. D. Broadhead and many translators had not considered within the context of performance—ancient or modern.

The Broadhead hypothesis was tested on American audiences during the six staged readings of a translation of *Persians* at the Ohio State University in 2009. The translation rendered into English every single word and its repetitions in *Persians* (as described in the previous section). The test was conducted

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54 Palin 1829, vii.

by Bethany Banister Rainsberg.<sup>55</sup> The audiences were asked to respond anonymously to the following two questions intended to measure their reactions to Aeschylus' word repetitions:

I thought that the repetition of words in the play was justified and did not bother me:

(a) strongly agree, (b) agree, (c) disagree, (d) strongly disagree

The top two things that confused me about this play were:

(a)

(b)

FIGURE 15.2 *Excerpt from the audience survey used at The Ohio State University readings of Aeschylus' Persians in 2009.*

A total of 322 people attended the six staged readings at three separate locations on the main campus of The Ohio State University that were furnished with one hundred, eighty, and sixty chairs respectively. Of these 322 people, a total of 173 completed the same questionnaire provided at each site (Fig. 15.2). The first question on the questionnaire asked each audience member to identify himself or herself as "student," "faculty," "staff," or "other." 106 (61.27%) were students; fourteen (8.09%) were faculty; seven (4.04%) were staff; and forty-six (26.58%) were "other."

Of the 173 respondents, a total of 168 answered the first question. Their anonymous responses were as follows: fifty-seven (33.92%) strongly agreed, ninety-one (54.14%) agreed, fourteen (8.33%) disagreed, and six (3.57%) strongly disagreed. However, the responses differed from category to category. Among the students, twenty-seven (26.47%) strongly agreed, fifty-nine (57.84%) agreed, ten (9.80%) disagreed, and six (5.88%) strongly disagreed. Among the faculty, eight (61.53%) strongly agreed, five (38.46%) agreed, and none of them disagreed or strongly disagreed. Among the staff, two (28.57%) strongly agreed, five (71.42%) agreed, and none of them disagreed or strongly disagreed. Among the "others," twenty (43.47%) strongly agreed, 22 (47.82%) agreed, 4 (8.69%) disagreed, and none of them strongly disagreed.

55 Rainsberg, unpublished paper.

This high percentage of respondents who felt that word repetition in *Persians* was justified and did not bother them was a rather surprising finding, and it invalidated H. D. Broadhead's hypothesis—as far as these American audiences were concerned. Contrary to expectation, differences in age and education did not alter significantly the way the audiences responded to repetition. The expectation was that older and better educated respondents would be more sensitive to (and annoyed by) repetition. Again, the numerical result was surprising. A higher percentage of faculty members than students were not bothered by repetition—though not higher than 15.68%. It would seem that repetition is not as bothersome for listeners as it might be for readers. When listeners notice some repetition, it is more likely that they will find it helpful, and therefore, justified.

A total of 105 respondents answered the last question. Their anonymous responses were as follows: sixteen (15.23%) reported that nothing confused them about the play during the staged reading; fifty-six (60.00%) reported that they were unclear about several things, which, upon closer examination, proved to be unrelated to word repetition;<sup>56</sup> and twenty-six (24.76%) found Aeschylus' references to people, places, and events confusing because they could not put a face to a name, or image to a place, or trace their memory to any of the historic events initiated by the Persians when they crossed over to Europe and invaded Greece—including their conquest of Athens, their defeat at Salamis, and their retreat back to Asia. These twenty-six respondents also reported that the references to the “unknown soldiers” of antiquity and the unknown locations of “old world geography” were confusing to them.

In sum, the impact of erasing word repetition in the translations of *Persians* is significant judging from the sheer number of repetitions in the surviving Greek text of this play. Word repetition is an essential part of the soundscape of this award-winning play and it certainly did not bother the majority of the Athenians in the audience in Athens in 472 BCE in the manner that it bothered

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56 These 56 respondents expressed their confusion by asking the following questions: Why did the Persians invade Greece and what events led to the invasion? Did Themistocles' plan or Xerxes' hubris bring about the defeat? Did the Greeks or the Gods cause the defeat of the Persians? Why did the Persians refer to Greek gods? Why did the Persians identify some of their allies as foreign speakers? Why did Aeschylus write this play? Is Aeschylus asking his audience to celebrate the defeat of the Persians or to feel sorry for them? Is the leader of the chorus a good or a bad guy? How did Darius' ghost advance the plot? Why did Pericles, who produced *Persians*, learn nothing from it and showed the same sort of imperialist hubris in the following decades? etc.



H. D. Broadhead in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 1960. However, avoiding word repetition has been a recurrent norm of translating *Persians* even though word repetition has a major presence in it. It is very likely that a percentage of word repetition in the surviving Greek text of *Persians* is related to the lost music (especially dance music) that Aeschylus wrote for it. Whatever music he wrote, it depended on repetition which amplified or intensified an “utterance”—be it a vowel, a consonant, a word, a phrase, a stress, a tone, a theme, a gesture, or a step, and so on.

Repetition (not just word repetition) in the surviving text of *Persians* is only minimally regular. Aeschylus uses no rhyme at all and he varies the rhythm (meter) to render the emotional possibilities of each new moment in the unfolding dramatic action. It would be helpful if a future study tested audience response to word repetition during staged performances, instead of staged readings, of *Persians*. Audiences forget a Persian name in less than a second. Repetitions move a Persian name (e.g., Artaphrenes) from the audience’s short-term memory into their longer-term memory and make the name sound familiar when it reappears in new contexts (e.g., Artaphrenes as the assassin of Mardus). Repetition commands attention and guides audiences to seek meaningful associations or connections regarding the predicament of Xerxes. The effect of word repetition in *Persians* on the formation of emotional (cognitive) states in the audience and the effect of this play on changing audience attitudes towards the Persians have not yet been studied.

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## *Persians* On French Television: An Opera-Oratorio Echoing the Algerian War

*Gabriel Sevilla*

### A Play Overwhelmed by its Reception

Those who read or view Aeschylus' *Persians* for the first time will be probably surprised by the passage where queen Atossa, facing the chorus of Persian elders, recounts the nightmare that has been troubling her since the night before. An obvious allegory of the play, Atossa's dream is arguably the first oneiric sequence in Western theater<sup>1</sup> raising the well-known psychoanalytic problem of a fulfilled premonitory dream.<sup>2</sup> Its first lines (181–7) also contain the so-called “invention of the barbarian” in the West,<sup>3</sup> that underlies the contemporary notion of Orientalism:<sup>4</sup>

Two beautifully dressed women seemed to appear to me, one decked out in Persian clothes, the other in Doric clothing [...] they were sisters of one race. One of them lived in her fatherland, Greece, which she had obtained by lot, the other in the land of the barbarians.<sup>5</sup>

This founding dream of Western culture appears in Aeschylus' earliest known work, which is also the earliest extant tragedy and the only historical one that has survived to now. Of course, we can, and we must, discuss whether or not the *Persians* is a canonical tragedy, whether it celebrates Greek victory over the Asian invader, or whether it arouses pity and fear for the defeated enemy. However, what remains crucial about these short pages by Aeschylus, which are not even considered among his finest,<sup>6</sup> is that they gave us tragedy, histori-

1 Taxidou 2004, 99.

2 Freud 1900 [2010].

3 Hall 1989. But see Kennedy 2013 for an alternate reading to the Orientalism of Hall.

4 Said 1994 [1978], 21: “[...] as early as Aeschylus' play *The Persians* the Orient is transformed from a very far distant and often threatening Otherness into figures that are relatively familiar.”

5 All text of Aeschylus is cited from Edith Hall's 1996 edition.

6 Rosenbloom 2006, 139.

cal fiction, and the invention of the other, as well as the first staged narration of a dream and its interpretation. Almost inevitably, Aeschylus' *Persians* was bound to become more important for its reception and later influence than it was for its own literary qualities. Every adaptation of *Persians*, just like every Western historical fiction, every orientalist representation, and every narrative dream sequence, send us back, one way or another, to the Persian queen's nightmare and to the brief drama to which it belongs.

In the twentieth century, Aeschylus' *Persians* was regularly adapted and, more importantly, it has remained linked to the decisive events of the time of its adaptations, living up to the historical nature of its fiction. Used as Nazi propaganda in the 1940s,<sup>7</sup> an anti-war plea in the First Gulf War (Peter Sellars, 1993),<sup>8</sup> as anti-communist during the Greek Civil War (1946–9),<sup>9</sup> and highlighting European opposition to American interventions in Korea and Vietnam (Mattias Braun, 1960–9),<sup>10</sup> *Persians* has served as a tool for the most varied, contradictory political stances in the most heterogeneous historical moments. A significant portion of our recent history can, in this sense, be explained through the reception of the barbarians as invented by Aeschylus. So far, however, reception studies on contemporary adaptations of *Persians* have been relatively scarce.<sup>11</sup>

### The *Persians* on French Television

Among these adaptations, there is one which has been especially neglected by critics but which is probably among the most significant contemporary versions of Aeschylus' play: *Les perses* (1961), an opera-oratorio by Jean Prat and Jean Prodromidès for French radio and television. The most recent and complete editions of Aeschylus' *Persians*,<sup>12</sup> as well as the most up-to-date and thorough studies of the play<sup>13</sup> do not mention this version, nor is it commonly found among the contemporary works that specialize in film adaptations of

7 Garland 2004, 211; Favorini 2003, 109; Ronsenbloom 2006, 162.

8 Hall 2007; Ronsenbloom 2006, 162.

9 Van Steen 2005, 368–9; Ronsenbloom 2006, 162. On an earlier use of *Persians* in the Ottoman Empire, see Van Steen, this volume.

10 Hall 2004, 175; Ronsenbloom 2006, 162.

11 Edith Hall (2004, 2007) is probably the most notable exception to this.

12 Garvie 2009; Hall 1996; Podlecki 1991.

13 Ronsenbloom 2006; Garvie 2009.

Greek tragedies,<sup>14</sup> where at best, just a few pages<sup>15</sup> or lines<sup>16</sup> are devoted to it. As for digital archives, they only include the credits of the film.<sup>17</sup> The main studies of *Les perses* are actually found in the histories of French television,<sup>18</sup> where the sociological and technical aspects prevail over any consideration of its reception, with the only exception being Étienne Ithurria.<sup>19</sup> We are, therefore, facing a particularly neglected adaptation within the contemporary reception of a play, which, paradoxically, is especially important for us because of its reception. *Les perses* is not, however, one more lapse to be filled in this lacunal history. It is probably one of the most relevant readings of a Greek tragedy set on stage in the last decades.

*Les perses* was first broadcast in France on October 31, 1961, at 8:30 p.m., across all national radio stations and on the only television channel at that time, the state-owned RTF (*Radiodiffusion-télévision française*—French television and radio broadcasting).<sup>20</sup> It was undoubtedly the event of the year on French television. In the midst of the Algerian war (1954–62), shortly after the victorious comeback of General de Gaulle (1959–1969), the eruption of this stylized anti-war version of Aeschylus into French households was like Gaullism itself: a political and media phenomenon. *Les perses*' premiere was held, however, that same year on September 16 at the Verdi Theater in Pisa before the Prix Italia jury;<sup>21</sup> also in 1961 Prodromidès' accompanying music would be awarded the prestigious French *Grand Prix du Disque*.<sup>22</sup> As far as we know, *Les perses* was only rebroadcast afterwards in France in 1966, 1975, and 1983, but it is the 1961 broadcast that provides the keys to interpreting its staging and political meaning.<sup>23</sup>

14 McDonald 2003; Michelakis 2013.

15 Mackinnon 1986.

16 Alaux 2001; Vasseur-Legangneux 2004.

17 *Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama*: <http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/productions/people/1673>. Others, limited to English-speaking references, simply do not include it, like the *Classical Receptions in Late Twentieth Century Drama and Poetry in English* (<http://www4.open.ac.uk/csdb/ASP/BookSearch.asp>).

18 Bretagne 1972; Delavaud 2005; Ledos 2007; Mauriac 2008; Sauvage and Veyrat-Masson 2012.

19 Ithurria 1980.

20 Ithurria 1980, 153.

21 Belloni 2008. *Les perses* did not win on the 1961 edition, but its participation meant its international premiere.

22 Ithurria 1980, 153–4.

23 Those were the broadcasts of December 20, 1966, on the ORTF, *Office de Radiodiffusion-télévision française* (French office of radio and television), which would replace the RTF in 1964; September 13, 1975, on the public television channel FR3 (France 3); December

Prat and Prodromidès' work stands out among other contemporary adaptations of Aeschylus' *Persians*, as well as of other Greek tragedies, for their very particular rereading of Aeschylus' political message and staging conception. From the political viewpoint, *Les perses* develops Aeschylus' original ambivalence between the discourse of pity and the discourse of admonition. In 1961 France, pity was associated with decolonization processes, while admonition echoed the silent tensions of the Cold War. *Les perses* succeeds at conveying both discourses and pushes French public opinion to support Algerian self-determination, that is, de Gaulle's government solution to the conflict. From the viewpoint of the staging, Prat and Prodromidès reread the *Persians* as an opera-oratorio, which they conceive *ad hoc* for mass media. This reading opens a dialogue with the tragic tradition in four ways: 1. assigning the chorus a leading, lyrical role, whose music is completely invented by Prodromidès in a contemporary style; 2. turning the coryphaeus into a modern, operatic story-teller; 3. transforming the position of the audience through the introduction of the political discourse of tragedy into the private sphere through television and radio; and, 4. fragmenting the unity of place by means of dynamic film editing. The overall result is a very innovative but also very Aeschylean reading of *Persians*, where the innovations in the staging and in the political message appear almost inextricably entangled.

### *The Political Reading: Between Pity and Admonition*

Some critics see Aeschylus' *Persians* not only as an attempt to arouse pity and fear in the Athenian audience for the defeated enemy,<sup>24</sup> but also as a warning about the risk of becoming the defeated enemy: the imperial temptation of Athens after the victories of Marathon and Salamis.<sup>25</sup> This twofold message, between pity and admonition, is clearly understood and developed by Prat and Prodromidès with one main goal: to justify de Gaulle's policy in Algeria (being officially merciful and implicitly admonitory), which was eventually formalized by the Évian Accords of March 1962, where Algerian self-determination was encouraged by means of a referendum. More clearly than Aeschylus, Prat

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1975, in *Téléthèque*, a cultural television program of French public channel TF1, *Télévision Française 1* (French television 1); and, again, in *Téléthèque* in 1983. *Les perses* would also be broadcast abroad: by *Radio-Canada* in January 1963, and by *Chaîne Belge* (Belgian Channel) in October 1964 (Ithurria 1980, 153). Only since 2009 the *Institut National de l'Audiovisuel* (French Media Institute) has commercialized a digital edition.

24 Munteanu 2012.

25 Rosenbloom 1995. But see Kennedy 2013, 70, who posits Aeschylus' ambivalent representation of the empire through the opposing characters of Xerxes and Darius.

and Prodromidès stress this ambivalence for the simple reason that the war in Algeria was not over in 1961 and was far from being won. There was a risk of both a Pyrrhic victory and of a military defeat with colonial overtones, especially following France's experiences in Indochina (1954) and Suez (1956). Added to this was a Cold War context where the two new nuclear superpowers, the United States and the U.S.S.R., did not look favorably on any attempt to preserve the old European colonial order.<sup>26</sup> In this sense, the situation could be interpreted not just as a matter of pity and self-determination, but also as a warning against the pride of the empire: the dangerous sum of *atê* and hubris leading to the loss of *olbos*.<sup>27</sup>

For France, the Algerian war was considered a civil rather than a colonial war. The former colony (1830) had early become a department (1848), being made part of French national territory. Moreover, the Muslim population of Algeria coexisted with the many European-born citizens and their descendants known as the *pièdes-noirs* (literally: black feet) following independence.<sup>28</sup> The conflict was much more complex and dramatic than any previous colonial episode. Thus, when the war entered the final stretch, Prat and Prodromidès' operatic version of Salamis could hardly be dissociated from Alger, and their reading quite accurately reflected the complexity of the moment—it was possible both to be Greek and to be Persian in Salamis; Xerxes represented not just the defeated enemy, but also the risk of becoming Xerxes; France could think of itself as both a democracy and an empire.<sup>29</sup> Prat and Prodromidès can be credited with having not only stressed, but also developed Aeschylus' original ambivalence.

### *Pity and Decolonization*

From the official perspective of de Gaulle's government, who intended to arouse pity in his fellow citizens, *Les perses* associates the desolation of the chorus and Xerxes' picture in rags with the Algerian "other": the indigenous Muslim population. Just like the two women in Atossa's dream, the French

26 Hobsbawm 1994, 175.

27 Rosenbloom 2006, 132. See also, Seaford 2012, esp. chapter 12.

28 The origin of this nickname is not really known, even if there are several plausible hypotheses; Baussant 2002, 396–411.

29 Kennedy 2013, 82 attributes this same ambivalence to the historical reception of Aeschylus' *Persians* in Athens: "Some would cheer the demise of their old enemy Xerxes and pray never to see a Persian army again. But others would embrace that same expansionism as represented by Darius thinking they could wield authority in Persia's stead without dirtying their hands with tyranny."



metropolitan audience had to understand that France and Algeria were “sisters of one race.” If Aeschylus was making a mythological allusion to Persia’s founding by Perseus, half way between ethnocentrism and *humanitas*,<sup>30</sup> in 1961 France, this political sisterhood was much more critical and concrete. The pity and fear for the Algerians was supposed to dissuade the metropolitan public opinion from keeping Algeria French, and push them instead to supporting the Gaullist solution of a referendum. This message was addressed to the entire population, but especially to French intellectuals, from Jean-Paul Sartre to Raymond Aaron, who had backed the Algerian cause from the outset. Sartre in particular, one of the strongest intellectual figures in France since the Resistance, contributed to the legitimacy of the historical narrative that led to Algerian self-determination, first from the pages of *Les Temps Modernes*, the journal he founded with Simone de Beauvoir in 1945, and then in 1956 in the *Comité d’Action des Intellectuels contre la Poursuite de la Guerre en Afrique du Nord* (Action Committee of Intellectuals against the Continuation of the War in North Africa).<sup>31</sup> Gaullism entrusted itself, as it were, to an influential academic minority, as well as to a blind faith in the “educational power” of television, which was supposed to instill the population with the government’s official message.<sup>32</sup> It is not strange nor wrong, in this respect, to qualify *Les perses* as an elitist film, or to emphasize that it was acclaimed by critics, but not so much by the audience.<sup>33</sup> It seems naïve, however, to reduce the choice for Aeschylus, and for such a complicated play as *Persians*, to a brave commitment to culture in an allegedly “golden period” of television,<sup>34</sup> or even to speculate on the possibility of a proud, despising gesture addressed to an ignorant mainstream audience.<sup>35</sup>

Outside of France, de Gaulle’s official discourse of pity was also supported by the United Nations, who had explicitly backed decolonization (by that name) in their Charter of 1946, encouraging the old colonies “to develop self-government.”<sup>36</sup> Under the pressure of French generals Jacques Massu and Raoul Salan, who led the claim for a French Algeria, de Gaulle knew that he had

30 Perea & Fernández-Galiano 2008, 225. Though, another likely interpretation is that the woman dressed in Persian garb represents not the Persians, but the Ionian Greeks—Aeschylus’ audience would have been well-tuned to their own ethnic differences enough to not consider the Doric-draped woman as representative of all Greeks.

31 Shepard 2008, 63–4.

32 Sauvage and Veyrat-Masson 2012, 71.

33 Ithurria 1980, 150.

34 Ledos 2007, 99; Favre 1997, 101.

35 See Mauriac’s review in *Le Figaro Littéraire* from November 11, 1961 in Mauriac 2008.

36 Shepard 2008, 57.

to win the war once again in the international forums and in the mass media. In this respect, the times were on his side. Not just because of the increasing international support for the decolonization processes, but also because of the rapid development of communications technology, which had been de Gaulle's favorite weapon since the Resistance. This use can be dated as of June 18, 1940, when De Gaulle's political birth took place on BBC radio with his first speech on French liberation. Likewise in 1961, during the generals' coup instigated by Salan and others, de Gaulle would address his soldiers directly by radio and succeed in countering the generals' commands.<sup>37</sup> Interpreting *Les perses*, therefore, does not amount to comparing Alger with Salamis, but to comparing the Gaullist discourse about Alger with the Aeschylean discourse on Salamis.

### *Admonition and Cold War*

Beyond the official discourse, de Gaulle's strategy had less to do with pity than with a silent but severe admonition made to his fellow citizens: in the armed peace following World War II, with the looming MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction) nuclear crisis, the two new superpowers supported decolonization for the sake of a more complex and deterring chess match. The Truman Doctrine (1947) officially offered US support to self-determination processes all over the world.<sup>38</sup> In a way, it was the admonitory reverse of the UN's merciful Charter from the year before. De Gaulle's policy in Algeria, therefore, had to move in national as well as international spheres, on the battlefield as well as in international forums, and between the official and unofficial stances of the two major powers. His own presidential aspirations were also part of this silent chess match.

Internationally, de Gaulle's magnanimous gesture authorizing the Algerian referendum was meant to save France from getting trapped in the tensions of the strongly polarized nuclear world of the 1960s. It also had to spare France the possibility of a new colonial-type fiasco from both a military and diplomatic viewpoint. This had been the case with the Indochina War and the Geneva Agreements (1954), signed by the Pierre Mendès-France government, which brought an end to French colonial aspirations in the Far East after the defeat of Dien Bien Phu (1954). If de Gaulle wanted to preserve his "*idée de la France*"<sup>39</sup> and keep a relevant position for his country in the new international order, he

37 Hobsbawm 1994, 501.

38 Hobsbawm 1994, 229.

39 De Gaulle's first sentence in his *War Memoirs* has become famous ever since: *Toute ma vie, je me suis fait une certaine idée de la France* (All my life I have thought of France in a

could not afford to make new enemies and suffer further material and human damages in another anachronistic war. In that sense, it was about not becoming Xerxes.

Nationally, the Algerian referendum allowed de Gaulle not only to avoid an unpopular and bloody fratricidal conflict, but also to gain a strong democratic legitimacy and to bypass the problematic Fourth Republic Parliament. Aeschylus' depiction of the Greeks as a democratic people without rulers ("They are called neither the slaves nor subjects of any single man," 242) was particularly well-suited in this respect. The Algerians were now Greeks: they had the right to decide by themselves. It must be noted, however, that de Gaulle was squaring a very peculiar circle here. As the official hero of the Resistance, he had to counter his former patriotic discourse and yield to the claims of the new enemy of France, the *Front de Libération Nationale* (National Liberation Front), the main representative and spokesman of Algerian independence. Contradictory as it may seem, if someone could turn the situation around and present the independence of a former colony not as a defeat or as a renunciation, but as an anti-war, anti-imperialist and democratic gesture, it was precisely the national hero of the 1940s.

For de Gaulle personally, this maneuver allowed him to make a grand return to French politics after twelve long years of absence. To assure his position, he made his return conditional on the writing of a new Constitution that he would base on his famous Bayeux discourses (1946), wherein he called for a strongly presidential parliamentary model.<sup>40</sup> In this manner, de Gaulle regained his former leading role and could present his years of absence, that is, the twelve years of the Fourth Republic, as a mere break between his two media appearances. Staging Aeschylus' *Persians* as a democratic and anti-war discourse, hostile to the imperial hubris and sensitive to the pathos of the enemy, could not help echoing Alger on October 31, 1961, after seven long years of war with no end in sight, when the only television channel and all the radio stations in France broadcast *Les perses*.

Interestingly, the plot offers many more and precise parallels from an admonitory perspective than it does from the perspective of pity. Here, Prat and Prodromidès point to the risk of becoming Xerxes, but also to the possibility of avoiding that risk, changing the course of the war. Alger remains Salamis,

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certain way), meaning the preeminent place in History that providence would allegedly reserve for France (de Gaulle 1998, 3).

40 The Bayeux discourses are accessible on the official website of Charles de Gaulle Foundation: <http://www.charles-de-gaulle.org/pages/espace-pedagogique/le-point-sur/les-textes-a-connaître/discours-de-bayeux-16-juin-1946.php>.

that is, the local enclave of an international conflict between two opposing political models: democracy and the empire. From that viewpoint, however, Xerxes now represents Salan's and Massu's colonial aspirations, the bid for a French Algeria at all costs. The ghost of Darius, a vague memory of the past coming back to (political) life after a long absence, seems quite an obvious correlation to General de Gaulle himself: summoned to save the old empire, he will end up criticizing imperialism itself. The chorus of Persian elders, inefficient and frightened, far removed from and ill-informed of the battle, embody a decadent version of the old parliamentary model that was incapable of making decisions or solving problems: exactly the Gaullist view of the Fourth Republic Parliament. As for Atossa, worried about Xerxes, troubled by violent and confusing images, nostalgic for Darius and disappointed with her senior advisors, she is a fair representation of the French people: expectant at the events, in favor of the return of the old leader, unsatisfied with the Parliament, and fearful of the fate of its soldiers. The messenger, the true core of the story, and the bearer of the official version of the facts that Atossa, the chorus, and Darius have not witnessed, represents the role of media in the conflict.

The leading role of the messenger is especially appropriate since, to a great extent, the Algerian war was a media war, in the sense that all resources (television, radio, press) were used both as a weapon and as a means to bring the conflict to an end. During the war, the Fourth Republic had silenced the facts, denying there was even a war in the first few years<sup>41</sup> and blocking any discussion about Algeria in the UN as an "internal affair."<sup>42</sup> The memory of the conflict was kept silent, too. It was only in 2002 that the French National Assembly officially established a national date for commemoration: March 19, the day of the bilateral and definitive ceasefire (1962) between the two camps.<sup>43</sup> The solution to the conflict was likewise created in the media. On September 1959, de Gaulle uttered the keyword "self-determination" for the first time on television.<sup>44</sup> This would change the course of events. He had never used the word during his rallies in Algeria; in fact, he had implied rather the opposite. As a response to this sudden turn, the military, including General Salan, who had favored his return, created in 1961 the terrorist *Organisation de l'Armée Secrète* (Secret Army Organization) to keep fighting for a French Algeria. They

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41 Thénault 2005.

42 Smouts 1972, 839.

43 French National Assembly, archives of the 11th term of the Fifth Republic ([http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/11/dossiers/journee\\_nationale\\_souvenir.asp](http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/11/dossiers/journee_nationale_souvenir.asp)).

44 Shepard 2008, 75.

also tried to kill de Gaulle in August 1962 in a terrorist attack.<sup>45</sup> Once again, de Gaulle had won the war through the media and not on the battlefield, living up to the nickname created for him by Nazi propaganda in the 1940s: “général micro” (“microphone General”).<sup>46</sup>

In that sense, Aeschylus’ messenger is a good illustration of the Gaullist construction of the conflict in the media: his diegesis of the war is strongly biased, but it is also the only one we have. *Les perses* was part of this sole, official version of the events, but the man behind the idea of adapting Aeschylus was not Prat or Prodromidès, as they recognized themselves; it was Albert Ollivier.<sup>47</sup> Director of Programs at the RTF, Ollivier had worked for *Radiodiffusion Nationale* (National Radio Broadcasting) throughout the Resistance years. After the war, he had quickly joined the *Rassemblement du Peuple Français* (Rally of the French People) (1947–55), a political movement founded by de Gaulle.<sup>48</sup> Ollivier was, in that sense, de Gaulle’s spokesman on French television, and the political message of *Les perses* cannot be abstracted from that relationship. This is not to say that Prat and Prodromidès were unaware of the Algerian echoes of their work. As Prat acknowledged years later in an interview, lines such as “*Non! L’armée n’est plus rien!*” (No! the army is nothing anymore!), sung on French television in 1961 could hardly be interpreted otherwise;<sup>49</sup> especially for Prat himself, who had translated and adapted Aeschylus’ text for the stage.

### The Staging: Between Historicism and Innovation

Beyond its political echoes, *Les perses* stands out for its inquiry into, and renovation of, the genre of tragedy, as well as for its profound transformation of the audience’s place. This balance between historicism and innovation relies on two key aspects: the lyrical adaptation of tragedy as an opera-oratorio and its staging and broadcasting on radio and television. Both aspects are closely interrelated by the obvious fact that the score almost always sets the pace for editing. However, given the technical and discursive specificities of each, we will examine them separately.

45 Harbi and Stora 2004, 689.

46 D’Almeida 2007, 249.

47 Prat and Prodromidès in *Téléthèque*, 1983.

48 Sauvage and Veyrat-Masson 2012, 36, 103.

49 Ithurria 1980, 149.

### *Tragedy and Opera-Oratorio*

We know very little about music in ancient Greek tragedy,<sup>50</sup> and almost nothing about the music in Aeschylus' *Persians*. As Prodromidès stated, "we know the theory, but not the texts."<sup>51</sup> While it is true that a fragment of a kitharoidic *nomos* entitled *Persians*, attributed to Timotheus of Miletus, has survived to our times, this fragment is thought to date from Euripides' days and is associated with the musical revolution of that epoch.<sup>52</sup> In this sense, it would be a considerable anachronism to use it for Aeschylus' play. Every musical recreation of the *Persians* seems thus condemned to reinvent the barbarian lyrically, for the simple reason that we do not have as many points of reference for the score as we do for the libretto. So far, we have only been able to speculate about the "Asiatic flavour" that Aeschylus may have given to his songs.<sup>53</sup> Prodromidès invents indeed everything: he does not even appeal to the main Greek instruments we associate with tragedy, such as the *aulos*. Thus, his music must be listened to as the "barbarian" from Atossa's mouth, that is, as a deliberate and self-aware orientalism.

In terms of style, *Les perses*' invention consists in associating the ritual origins of Greek tragedy to the Christian ritual of Mass. To stress the freedom of his reading, Prodromidès writes the Mass in a very eclectic, contemporary way, combining polytonality with elements of serialism. The lyrical invention of the barbarian is therefore complete, but it is also inspired by the historicist hypothesis on the ritual origins of tragedy. Regarding the liturgical style, Prodromidès recognized the use of particular keywords, for example "*déchiré*" (torn), with the structural and rhythmic value of an "Alleluia" or a "Requiem", as well as the names of Persian warriors as an invocation.<sup>54</sup> These repetitions not only stress the ritual character of the piece, but they also confer spiritual overtones to the chorus of Persian elders. As for the polytonal, contemporary style, Prodromidès' score is reminiscent of the French twentieth-century neo-classical avant-garde, especially of Darius Milhaud and some of his works on Greek classical themes including *Les choéphores*, *Les euménides* and *Médée*.

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50 West 1992.

51 *Téléthèque*, 1983: "On en connaît la théorie, mais on n'en connaît pas les textes." My translation.

52 Wilson 2005, 190.

53 West 1992, 353. Since 2013, however, the British Academy has been developing a research project directed by professor Armand D'Angour aiming to reconstruct ancient Greek music that may enable us to know more in the future (<http://www.bbc.com/news/business-24611454>).

54 Prodromidès in *Téléthèque*, 1983.

This interplay of historicism and innovation is even stronger from the viewpoint of genre, where Prat and Prodromidès inquire into the tragic role of “lyric poetry” with respect to “plot, character, diction, thought [and] spectacle” (Aristotle *Poetics* 1450a9–10).<sup>55</sup> The main film adaptations of Greek tragedies, for example those by Pier Paolo Pasolini (*Oedipus Rex*, *Medea*), Michael Cacoyannis (*Electra*, *The Trojan Women*, *Iphigenia*), Jules Dassin (*Phaedra*) or Lars von Trier (*Medea*), relegate music to its usual secondary roles in cinema: creating atmosphere, underlining psychological refinements, providing a neutral background, building a sense of continuity, and underpinning the theatrical buildup of a scene.<sup>56</sup> In some cases, for example Straub-Huillet’s *Antigone*, the musical accompaniment is simply omitted. In contrast, Prat and Prodromidès accord lyric poetry and the chorus the leading role they had in Aeschylus’ plays.<sup>57</sup> This is apparent in their choice of opera-oratorio as a modern genre translation of tragedy: as an opera, it grants music a leading role; as an oratorio, it opposes the chorus to the coryphaeus, which is turned into a modern story-teller. Once again, Prat and Prodromidès’ invention shows a free historical inspiration. They do not hide their anachronistic choices, but these are inventions as much as they are inquiries into the origins of tragedy.

Genre and style choices make *Les perses* a singular work, but they also point to one of its few clear precedents: Jean Cocteau and Igor Stravinsky’s *Œdipus Rex* (1927). Just like *Les perses*, the opera-oratorio based on Sophocles appeals to the Christian referent of the Mass in order to reinvent an ancient lost ritual tradition. Moreover, *Œdipus Rex* sets a very particular conception of the setting and the actors whose influence is apparent in *Les perses*. Before the music plays, Cocteau and Stravinsky’s speaker defines the style of the opera as “monumental.”<sup>58</sup> By this, he means that the actors will move impersonally, as if they were living statues. That is why Cocteau and Stravinsky appealed to the ancient use of masks: to depersonalize the human figure. Their masks were therefore not supposed to recreate the original Greek masks, nor to fulfill the same function. Without mentioning *Œdipus Rex*, Prat acknowledges that he

55 Halliwell 1995.

56 Defined by Aaron Copland in his 1949 article in *The New York Times* (Prendergast 1992, 213–22).

57 Oliver Taplin, however, strongly criticized Prat’s reading: “He had read that early tragedy was like an oratorio: so his Chorus scarcely moves [...] The costumes, obedient to the book, are statuesque,” in “The Delphic Idea and after,” in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 17 July 1981, 811 (Mackinnon 1986, 55).

58 Jean Cocteau and Igor Stravinsky 1949; see also Craft and Stravinsky 1982 [1961], 21.

made the same choice in order to create an analogue effect.<sup>59</sup> The anonymity of the chorus, contrasting with its leading role in the play, was stressed in this way. For a French audience of the 1960s, raised in the film tradition of the star-system, this was, of course, one of the least film-type ways to tell a story. Even to tell a tragedy.

Another influence worth mentioning in this sense is that of the *Groupe de Théâtre Antique de la Sorbonne* (Sorbonne Ancient Theater Group), whose version of *Les perses* became quite well-known and was praised in its time, among other reasons, because of its innovative “statuesque” style.<sup>60</sup> When asked about a possible influence, however, Prat categorically denied it.<sup>61</sup>

### *Tragedy, Radio, and Television*

As an adaptation for the media, *Les perses* completely transforms the tragic stage, as well as the place of the audience. Aeschylus’ minimal plot and its poor temporal dimension barely leaves any possibility for innovation, excepting the transgression of the unity of time, place, and action so strictly observed by Aeschylus. Only the unity of place, and especially the setting, as well as the absence of a live audience in an adaptation conceived for television allowed Prat to develop a significant rereading of the play without transgressing the basic rules of the genre.

Regarding the setting, Prat draws all his inspiration from the known extant Persian archaeological sites. Clear examples are Prat’s recreation of the Palace of Susa, strongly inspired by the ruins of Persepolis, or his imitation of the Gate of all Nations, or Xerxes’ Gate. More rigorously, his representation of Darius’ tomb replicates the rock-cut sepulcher of Naqsh-e Rostam (Iran), built for the Persian emperor and still preserved to this day.<sup>62</sup> This monumental setting does not lead Prat, however, to any kind of filmed theater. Quite the opposite; he multiplies the camera angles and movements throughout the simple unity of place inherited from Aeschylus. This is apparent from the initial credits, when a general low-angle shot shows the audience the Palace of Susa for the first time (Fig. 16.1). The same happens with the dramatic high-angles of the chorus, which offer an impossible perspective for a theatrical audience (Fig. 16.2).

59 Jean Prat in *Téléthèque*, 1983.

60 Literary critic Roland Barthes, co-founder of the group (1936), is known to have played the role of Darius’ ghost in this academic version (Rivière 2015).

61 Vasseur-Legangneux 2004, 122.

62 On the possible influence of these sites on the original staging of Aeschylus’ *Persians*, see Kennedy 2013.





FIGURE 16.1  
*Opening credits.*



FIGURE 16.2  
*Viewing the chorus.*

The clearest example, however, arrives with the final credits, where Prat introduces a series of very cinematographic views over a rocky inlet, seen from the land, completely unrelated to the stage. These outdoor shots are interesting because they probably refer to the island of Salamis and to the straits where the Persian army was defeated. Prat's camera could be implicitly recreating Xerxes' viewpoint from the foothills of Mount Egaleo, where he could overlook the whole strait. To put it in the words of the messenger (465–7): "Xerxes wailed aloud as he saw the depth of the disaster. For he had a seat with a clear view of the whole militia, a high bank close to the sea."

These last shots stress the cinematographic conquest of an impossible mimesis for Aeschylus: the battlefield that we could only imagine in the dramatic diegesis of the messenger (Figs. 16.3 and 16.4).<sup>63</sup>

63 We disagree here with Mackinnon, who describes these shots as an opposition between a particular and a general dimension of the play (Mackinnon 1986, 59–60): "The natural



FIGURE 16.3  
*The Battle of Salamis, view 1.*



FIGURE 16.4  
*The Battle of Salamis, view 2.*

From the viewpoint of the staging, the most remarkable innovation refers to the scene where Darius' ghost is invoked. Prat does not place the emperor's tomb on one side of the stage, where the audience could see it from the beginning of the play, as assumed by most critical editions.<sup>64</sup> Quite the contrary, he places the tomb inside of the Palace.<sup>65</sup> This simple change demands a whole viewpoint transition from the outside to the inside of the building which is

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world is [...] sharply contrasted with the world of the play, since it has been rigorously excluded until the last words are spoken, but the movement from particularised to generalised locality after the credits serves as an analogy for the relation of the drama of the Persians to that of the worlds outside the royal court."

64 For an alternate reading, see Seaford 2012. For an overview on the debate, see Garvie 2009.

65 On the interplay between an "inside" and an "outside" of the stage in other plays of Aeschylus (e.g. in *Oresteia*), see Bakewell in this volume.



FIGURE 16.5 *Entering the palace.*

performed by means of a match-cut, dividing the stage into two halves—a two-fold perspective, which is also unthinkable for a theater audience.

The cinematographic appropriation of the stage is especially obvious considering that the tomb of Naqsh-I Rostam is unconceivable inside of four walls due to its enormous dimensions. As opposed to Aeschylus' monolithic, frontal scenic style, Prat shows a very cinematographic fragmentation of space and point of view, instantiated not just by this simple and categorical match-cut, but also by a series of high- and low-angles and camera movements. The apparition of Darius' ghost thereby becomes another means of freeing the monumental style of *Les perses* from any possible effect of filmed theater. By this heterodox choice, Prat also stresses Aeschylus' invention of the barbarian afterlife: the historicist replication of Naqsh-I Rostam, standing several meters over the floor, presents the Persian underworld as an "upperworld" (Fig. 16.7), contrary to its Hellenocentric assimilation to the Greek Hades, that is, to an inner and/or lower dimension.<sup>66</sup>

66 Bakola 2014.



FIGURE 16.6

*The Queen.*

FIGURE 16.7

*Replication of Naqsh-I Rostam.*

As for the place of the audience, the transformation of ancient Greek theater space is complete. When the RTF and French radio stations broadcast *Les perses* in 1961, there were about 4 million viewers across France.<sup>67</sup> As opposed to any theatrical performance, or to the usual film and operatic adaptations, the television and radio version of *Les perses* involved an exponential growth in audience size for one simple reason: the intrusion of the political message and the staging of tragedy into French households. Since de Gaulle's coming to power, the governmental control over the media had become much more thorough and systematic than in the Fourth Republic years.<sup>68</sup> Alain Peyrefitte, Minister of Information (1962–6) during the transition from the RTF to its successor, the ORTF, would admit several years later: “La RTF, c’est le gouvernement dans

67 In *Téléthèque*, 1983.

68 Sauvage and Veyrat-Masson 2012, 68–9.

la salle à manger de tous les français!" (The RTF, it's the government in every French dining room!).<sup>69</sup>

In terms of reception, the entering of tragedy into the private sphere of French households is much more important than any change in tragic discourse. Through radio and television, the Athenian public performance space suddenly becomes family-sized and isolated, like a modern opera box, but also overcrowded: isolation and massive reception went hand in hand in *Les perses*' staging.<sup>70</sup> This subversion of tragic reception is all the more apparent since *Les perses*' heterodox historicism had tried to bring tragedy closer to itself while radio and television would push it far away from its original audience.

As for the radio broadcast of the play, it had the particularity of offering two different versions: one independent from television and another complementary to it. All in all, there were three versions of the opera: one for television alone, another for radio alone, and a third one combining the other two.<sup>71</sup> The Gaullist government recommended the latter, advising the audience to watch the opera on television while they listened to a radio placed behind their seats, where the second audio track was being played.<sup>72</sup> Since the voices heard on the radio behind the viewer's seat did not match the faces on the screen, the two audio tracks produced a stereophonic effect: not the usual left-to-right one, but an innovative in-front-behind one, that is, a surround sound effect, immersing the audience in the play through music. It was the first time in France that all the resources of radio and television were combined to put into effect this new technique, which has since remained an isolated experiment with no further exploration.

More than the institutional promotion of the play, this innovative audio technique betrayed the government's awareness of their very particular maneuver with *Les perses*: the introduction into French households of a political discourse meant for the public sphere rather than for private entertainment.

69 Brochand 1994, 109.

70 From a historical perspective, that refers back to the origins of cinema itself, where the individual viewing of films proposed by Thomas A. Edison with his *kinetoscope* (1889) competed with the public projections of Lumière Brothers' *cinématographe* (1895). In the first half of the twentieth century, the Lumière Brothers imposed their model. With the arrival of television, however, the kinetoscope "recovered" in the households what it had lost in the theaters and nickelodeons. In that sense, the broadcasting of *Les perses* is completely Edisonian.

71 Hawk 1961.

72 Ithurria 1980, 137.

If *Les perses* had been performed in the theaters, with an entrance fee like any other opera, the potential audience would have been much smaller. Like a sociocultural experiment, Prat and Prodromidès' work was performed only in the laboratory of public media. Considering that the only RTF channel at the time was state-owned, the political intention of this peculiar operatic premiere seems quite obvious. Even now, despite the complete integration of almost any kind of content in the private sphere, it is difficult to imagine a discourse as politically invasive and artistically ambitious as *Les perses*, being broadcast by public television and all national radios simultaneously in prime time.

### Conclusions

In their close interplay, *Les perses*' political and staging dimensions show the complexity and importance of this contemporary adaptation of Aeschylus. One dimension cannot be explained without the other, and their interplay is the essential Aeschylean feature that *Les perses* succeeds in rereading and preserving. Prat and Prodromidès' adaptation could not be explained without the contemporary political event of the advent of the Fifth French Republic. As a television and radio broadcast, it would not have been possible without a cultural policy as interventionist and artistically risky as Ollivier's, who had yoked his political career to de Gaulle's since the early years of the Resistance. We could not understand *Les perses* either outside the technological and social context of 1960s France, with all radio stations and the only television channel being monopolized by a government as media-conscious as de Gaulle's. The anti-war and anti-imperialist message of *Les perses*, just like de Gaulle's ascension to power, could not be understood outside of the Algerian War, the Cold War, and the context of decolonization.

On the other hand, if *Les perses* was only a tragedy echoing a political conflict, it would rank as one of many other adaptations of doubtless historical and aesthetic value which transposes a plot to the screen, or as a filmed theater performance which fits the ancient tragic forms in a modern theatrical or operatic staging. Far from that, Prat and Prodromidès engaged in an ambivalent and complex dialogue with the tragic tradition whose origin we associate today with Aeschylus' *Persians*, a dialogue that constantly wavers between historicism and invention, sometimes attempting to rebuild and sometimes conceiving anew the ancient tragic stage. For all those reasons, *Les perses* stands out today among the contemporary versions of this earliest extant tragedy by

Aeschylus, which is also the sole surviving historical Greek tragedy and which introduces the first dream sequence in Western theater. Our intention has been to contribute to the rescue of this fundamental reading of Aeschylus from its relative oblivion, since we also consider it one of the fundamental contemporary readings of the tragic genre set on stage.<sup>73</sup>

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# Aeschylus' *Oresteia* on British Television

Amanda Wrigley

## Introduction

This essay examines three British television presentations of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* trilogy which are markedly different in style, address and purpose, and which were broadcast on different networks across three consecutive decades of the twentieth century. The first is a 1961 ITV Schools production which situated the trilogy in a broader study of guilt and retribution aimed at teenagers; the second, a 1979 BBC studio production with a stellar cast and striking sci fi design concept; and the third, Channel 4's 1983 broadcast of the masked stage production of the trilogy directed by Peter Hall for the National Theatre. Despite the differences between them, all of these productions reflect the appetite for (both producing and watching) Greek drama on British television in these three decades, a period when plays from the entire theatrical repertoire—spanning ages, nations and cultures—were regularly televised and watched by huge audiences, especially when compared with the number of people experiencing these plays as live theatre. This essay will analyse these television texts and their various production, aesthetic and historical contexts in order to develop insights into the role that the television medium played in establishing the place of Aeschylus in the popular imagination in twentieth-century Britain.

The corpus of British television productions of Greek drama is small—in the region of thirty play productions, most of which were broadcast in the 1960s to the 1980s. The majority of these were original creations for television, shot in the studio, with a significant number made for broadcast within educational contexts (such as schools and BBC-Open University programming);<sup>1</sup> a small minority, but again significant, consisted of re-presentations of existing theatre productions.<sup>2</sup> These thirty or so television broadcasts of Greek plays constitute around 1 per cent of the total number of theatre play productions on

1 See Wrigley 2018 on schools and 2017 on the Open University.

2 On the extraordinary success of the Associated-Rediffusion television studio presentation of Dimitris Rondiris' Peiraikon Theatron internationally touring stage production of Sophocles' *Electra*, performed in modern Greek and shown without subtitles, see Wrigley 2015b.

British television which span nearly a century—from the very first transmission in 1930 of Lance Sieveking's production of Luigi Pirandello's play *The Man with a Flower in his Mouth* (transmitted via John Logie Baird's experimental television system) up to the occasional offerings of recent years, such as the 2015 BBC Four screening of Ivo van Hove's Barbican production of Sophocles' *Antigone* starring Juliette Binoche. Amongst the 3,000+ theatre play productions transmitted on British television across this period, Shakespeare, George Bernard Shaw and Henrik Ibsen are the three most popular playwrights, although it is important to note that the full range includes Jacobean tragedy, farces, medieval mystery plays, verbatim theatre, and all the big (and many not-so-big) names of the twentieth-century stage.<sup>3</sup>

These thirty or so Greek plays on television are just one of many strands in the long tradition and fascinating history of producing theatre plays on the small screen. They also have a relationship with the way in which the stories, histories, and ideas of ancient Greece were engaged with in other television programming genres across these decades—notably documentaries, such as Mortimer Wheeler's *Armchair Voyage: Hellenic Cruise* (BBC 1959), Compton Mackenzie's *The Glory that was Greece* (BBC 1959), and the many others that followed.<sup>4</sup> These television productions of Greek drama are also closely related to the several hundred BBC Radio programmes on a Greek theme which were broadcast since 1923 and that include scores of performances of Greek plays and their modern adaptations (whether originally written for the stage or for radio); creative re-workings of other ancient texts such as Homer's epic poems, and the Socratic dialogues, often for dramatized performance; and a significant number of creative re-imaginings of (usually historical) ancient Greek texts and topics in the form of feature programmes (many of which were broadcast as propaganda in the Second World War); and individual talks or series broadcast as part of the school curriculum or adult education schemes.<sup>5</sup>

Aeschylus regularly appeared "on the air": for example, I have written elsewhere about the production history of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* on BBC Radio

3 The AHRC-funded project "Screen Plays: Theatre Plays on British Television," led by John Wyver at the University of Westminster, has been actively researching this since 2011. The project has a database (<http://bufvc.ac.uk/screenplays>) and blog (<https://screenplaystv.wordpress.com>).

4 These are increasingly receiving sustained critical discussion by scholars: see, e.g., Hobden 2013a and 2013b; Wyver 2018. Ancient Greece on television is, I would argue, only a distant cousin of cinematic engagements with the ancient world, although the scholarship on that body of work is of importance in broader debates: see, for example, Michelakis 2013, Paul 2013, and Blanshard and Shahabudin 2011.

5 This is the subject of Wrigley 2015a.

(in translations and adaptations by writers as diverse as Gabriel Josipovici, Louis MacNeice and Philip Vellacott). In 1956, for example, approximately 35,000 listeners took the opportunity to hear a 3¾-hour Third Programme production of the *Oresteia* in Philip Vellacott's translation (or, five hours, including interval music). The producer Raymond Raikes devised a substantial educational framework for the production: Vellacott's introductory talk was followed by others on the theological and moral aspects of the trilogy by Hugh Lloyd-Jones (who was shortly to become Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford); and, on the evening after the production, Elsa Vergi of the Greek National Theatre read and sang extracts from the trilogy in Greek (eight in ancient Greek, and one in Ioannis Gryparis' modern Greek translation), which were interspersed with summaries in Vellacott's translation spoken by Raikes himself. Indeed, as the critic J. C. Trewin noted in his review in *The Listener*, "in radio-drama, the word is in our ear, and when the word is that of the *Oresteia* we have to be in full training."<sup>6</sup>

The audience research reports compiled by the BBC for radio and television programmes on Greek drama demonstrate the variety of ways in which mass media forms brought knowledge, experience and enjoyment to a body of listeners and viewers which was not only massive, sometimes numbering into the millions, but also incredibly diverse and mainly situated beyond the relatively narrow theatrical and educational spheres for Greek tragedy. Through this kind of dramatic activity the Corporation continued its mission to grant a large and diverse public common access to an ambitiously wide range of works which were considered to constitute the nation's cultural wealth.

It was not just the BBC, but other broadcasting networks too, that worked alongside and often hand-in-hand with other cultural and educational spheres (for example, publishers of paperback translations) to give works from ancient Greece a strong public identity away from the "classical" classroom and, indeed, the professional theatre. What these three television productions of the *Oresteia* discussed here have in common, despite their apparent diversity, is their strong pitch—via contextual programming and pre-broadcast print resources—to a wide public which was to a great extent located beyond that which may be already familiar with the plays from the page or the stage. The ways in which these television programmes attempted to make Aeschylus meaningful for the many-headed mass audience is the focus of this study.

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6 J. C. Trewin. 1956. "Mainly Classical," *The Listener*, 31 May 1956, 733. See Wrigley 2015a, Chapter 7 for this radio *Agamemnon*s study (or an earlier version: Wrigley 2006).

### *An Oresteia for Teenagers: The Angry Gods (1961)*

From the inception of schools television in the late 1950s and early 1960s, programmes produced by both the BBC and independent companies such as Associated-Rediffusion brought the experience of dramatic texts in performance to thousands of school pupils across Britain (plus a “great army of eavesdroppers,” as the *Radio Times* referred to domestic viewers of all ages).<sup>7</sup> In their engagement with theatre plays, these programmes demonstrate a strong pedagogic function, with both play and performance contextualised and elucidated in a variety of ways, from introductory, explanatory talks, narrators within programmes (serving as a kind of teacher figure) to printed pamphlets offering background and teaching approaches. Strikingly, internal documentation from the BBC and Associated-Rediffusion relates that school-age viewers for such programmes were located not within grammar schools or public schools, where some foreknowledge of this subject matter may have been assumed, but mainly within non-examination streams within secondary moderns and, therefore, thought to be unlikely to be engaging with theatrical works in other contexts.

In the schools’ television “curricula,” Shakespeare, naturally, featured prominently in a range of plays from British and foreign-language playwrights (in translation) from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. There was a significant amount of Greek tragedy, with productions of, for example, Sophocles’ *Antigone*, Euripides’ *Trojan Women* and Aristophanes’ *Peace*; sometimes there were double bills, as in the BBC’s 1962 *Greek Drama* series, introduced by the philosopher Bernard Williams who sought to engage sixth formers with moral questions arising from Sophocles’ *Philoctetes* and Euripides’ *Bacchae*.<sup>8</sup>

Also, in 1961, *The Angry Gods*, an eight-episode Associated-Rediffusion series, was transmitted by independent television networks across the UK and Northern Ireland (just a little over five years since the start of ITV in 1955). It offered performances of Euripides’ *Iphigenia at Aulis*, Aeschylus’ three *Oresteia* plays, and Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* in a broad study of guilt and retribution for school pupils aged thirteen and above situated in around 1,500 schools across the country. The 25-minute programmes went out towards the end of the school day on Wednesdays, with a repeat on Fridays, from January to March 1961; this was one of six series on diverse topics

7 School Broadcasting Council, “A Second Public Report on School Television, 1962,” p. 13 (draft transcript, file R16/776/2, BBC WAC).

8 *Bacchae* is discussed in Wrigley 2017.

created by Associated-Rediffusion in this academic term.<sup>9</sup> The series, directed by Pat Baker, featured Martin Worth's commentary and adaptations, music by Eric Spear, designs by Barbara Bates, and narration by Michael Hawkins. Students from the Central School of Speech and Drama took the parts of the Chorus and main roles were played by Jill Balcon (Clytemnestra / Hermione), Bernard Brown (Polixenes), Zoe Caldwell (Cassandra), Anne Castaldini (Iphigenia), Avril Elgar (Electra), Christopher Gilmore (Florizel), Nigel Green (Agamemnon / Leontes), Neville Jason (Orestes) and Jane Merrow (Perdita).

Many schools productions were by necessity abridged versions of plays, but in *The Angry Gods* there was undoubtedly a substantial difference between *Iphigenia at Aulis*, which was given approximately ten minutes of screen-time in episode 1 (*A Sacred Offering*, first transmitted on 18 January 1961), the three plays of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* trilogy, which were abridged to twenty-five minutes each (ep. 2, *The Crimson Path*, 25 January; ep. 3, *The Black Furies*, 1 February; ep. 4, *The Judgement*, 8 February), and *The Winter's Tale*, which was given a much more expansive treatment over four programmes (eps 5–8, *Some Ill Planet Reigns*, *Apollo's Angry*, *The Flowers of Spring*, and *The Oracle is Fulfilled*). A brochure for teachers noted that the intention in each case was to offer "the most vivid interpretation":

to bring the theatre of these two widely different ages [ancient Greece and Shakespearean England] within the small compass of the television screen [...] will obviously necessitate free adaptation of the action and text to give the most vivid interpretation, particularly in the case of the Greek plays, but the aim will be specifically to show how the force and power of these dramas continue to the present day.<sup>10</sup>

No recordings from the series exist in the archives, but close reading of the camera script permits some insights and other kinds of documentation are similarly illuminating: stills printed in the promotional material, for example, indicate that a set with a sweep of steps and large walls was used for the Greek plays and *The Winter's Tale*. Another image reveals that Dionysus was represented by a plaster cast on a pedestal: he is surrounded by four chorus

9 *The Times*, 3 February 1961, 5 lists the others as being *The Farming Year*, *British Isles* (geography), *The Story of Medicine*, *The World around Us*, *Chez les Dupré* (elementary French).

10 "The Angry Gods. Independent Television Programmes for Schools. Notes for Spring Term 1961. Associated-Rediffusion," 4, in file ART/48/1–4, BFI Library. (All archival materials cited are located in this folder, unless otherwise indicated.).

members who appear to be wearing masks, wigs and hooded cloaks; they stand with their right arm raised, palms turned towards him.

The first episode, *A Sacred Offering*, gives a sense of Associated-Rediffusion's approach to using television for pedagogical purposes, contextualizing the plays and their dramatic conventions which may have been unfamiliar to the school pupils: it opens with familiar shots of the Jodrell Bank observatory, a microscope, and a polling station to illustrate the narrator Michael Hawkins' assertion that for the origin of many things, including drama, we must look back to ancient Greece. Greece is not, however, idealized: Athens as birth-place of democracy is discussed, for example, but "cruelty and injustice, poverty, and even slavery" are mentioned. A paraphrase of Pericles' Funeral Oration, as relayed by Thucydides, is offered and ancient Greek theatrical conventions (such as masks) are introduced through a brief dramatized extract from Euripides' *Bacchae*. The narrator then engages the imagination of the pupil-viewers by 'walking' them around the physical space with the following words (the notes in square brackets are also from the camera script):

Well, imagine yourself a citizen of Athens over two thousand years ago. It is spring, the most important time of the year to worship the god Dionysus whom you depend on to make the crops grow. As part of the festival in his honour, you know that various plays to be performed [Mix to 1: Clytemnestra / Iphigenia / Agamemnon with Servant on top of rostra] are now being rehearsed [...] and so, next morning, to the great theatre of Dionysus [camera pans round the first tier of seats in an ancient theatre] [...] all eyes are on the circular area known as the *orchestra* [where] the chorus will perform.<sup>11</sup>

Before the ten-minute version of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, the narrator relates Paris' abduction of Helen and the Greeks' subsequent decision to wage war on the Trojans. He leaves the story at the point when Agamemnon has instructed his wife to bring his daughter Iphigenia to Aulis to be married to the hero Achilles—a ruse so that he can sacrifice her in order to appease the gods and secure fair winds for the sea-journey to Troy. The camera script indicates that this was a very reduced version of the main action: for example, each chorus is condensed to around ten lines, Achilles does not appear as a character, and the child sacrifice is omitted. But what remains is to the point, getting across the main thrust of the drama. Consider how Iphigenia's plea to her father for her life is abridged to six lines (from around forty in Euripides):

11 *A Sacred Offering* camera script, 6–7.

I have nothing left to offer you  
 But tears, my only eloquence. I hang  
 A suppliant. Kill me not in youth's fresh prime.  
 Sweet is the light of life, while all beneath  
 Is naught. He's mad who seeks to die, for life  
 Though ill excels whatever's good in death.<sup>12</sup>

Programmes 2, 3 and 4 each present an abridged version of the plays of the *Oresteia*. *The Crimson Path*, which deals with *Agamemnon*, opens once again with the narrator:

Remember the agony of Agamemnon at Aulis? [...] Why were the gods so vindictive towards him? To the early Greeks the gods seemed very often vindictive, revengeful and immoral. [...] That evil might be more due to man than God was one of the things which in the 5th century BCE was only just being realised—and it's this question, how far Man or God is responsible for good and evil, that dominates the plays we're going to see from now on.<sup>13</sup>

The narrator goes on to explain the background to the plot and “the vicious circle of crime, revenge which itself must be avenged,” whilst carefully avoiding the potentially morally problematic issue of adultery.<sup>14</sup> Rather than introduce Aegisthus as Clytemnestra's lover, he simply says that while Agamemnon was at war his wife plotted “revenge—with someone else who hated Agamemnon too” (3), drawing on another, internecine, strand of the Greek myth. The play opens, as in Aeschylus, with the Watchman, but the pace of the drama is broken up with the reappearance of the narrator who offers an interpretation of his words, thus: “He is depressed by the darkness of night, the darkness of a house whose king and glory are absent. From all such darkness, the darkness in fact of sin and evil itself, he prays for release, for deliverance, for light. But, as we shall see through all this play, when the light comes it brings new darkness with it” (3).

*The Black Furies* and *The Judgement* both present their respective plays—*Libation Bearers* and *Eumenides*—with minimal introduction from the narrator. However, it is not possible to know how much historical contextualisation

12 *A Sacred Offering* camera script, 14.

13 *The Crimson Path* camera script, 1.

14 “*The Angry Gods*. Independent Television Programmes for Schools. Notes for Spring Term 1961. Associated-Rediffusion.” 5.



and discussion of theatrical conventions and the issues of the play was given for the four programmes of *The Winter's Tale* since the camera scripts for these do not appear to have been preserved in the archive.<sup>15</sup> We do, however, learn from other sources how the programme-makers intended to establish the link between the Greek and Elizabethan theatres. In the leaflet for teachers, the dissimilarities are first enumerated, with emphasis on the formality and restraint of the Greeks with regard to the off-stage location of gruesome acts of bloodshed, whereas "The Elizabethans on the other hand loved to see acts of violence: stabbing, strangling and gouging out the eyes are all part of the spectacle which they enjoyed." "Many deep and significant similarities" are then listed: first, "in both periods the theatre was for everybody and the audience drawn from every walk of life;" and performances took place in the open air, in theatres where "the seats were arranged in a circular formation with the acting taking place in a central space, the orchestra in the Greek theatre, the apron stage in the Elizabethan."<sup>16</sup> The sub-text is of course that, via television, theatre is still "for everybody," "from every walk of life."

At the time of writing no reports of how this particular series was received in the classroom have come to light (as have, by comparison, for contemporaneous BBC schools drama), but the aspiration of those involved in bringing programmes such as these to life for pupils was outlined in a *TV Times* article announcing *The Angry Gods* to viewers: Enid Love, Associated-Rediffusion's Head of Schools Television wrote, "We try to bring actual experience into the classroom; to involve the viewers emotionally with the subject we are presenting, and leave them with their curiosity aroused."<sup>17</sup> The leaflet for teachers suggested that the series might be used "not only in its more obvious context as a comparison of certain specific plays and ages, but also as a basis for further study of great civilisations, of the history of drama, of recurrent themes in the plays and, more specifically, as a background for study of set texts, such as *Samson Agonistes*."<sup>18</sup> So, as an introduction to canonical works of dramatic literature (ancient and modern) but also, more broadly, as a way of stimulating

15 The reason for preserving scripts for episodes 1–4 and not 5–8 may have been related to the fact that the first four were, in 1963, re-broadcast as part of the ITV schools series *Theatres and Temples: The Greeks*.

16 "*The Angry Gods*. Independent Television Programmes for Schools. Notes for Spring Term 1961. Associated-Rediffusion." 3.

17 Enid Love, "Back to School with Lamb's Tales—and Shakespeare." *TV Times*, 15 January 1961, 10.

18 "*The Angry Gods*. Independent Television Programmes for Schools. Notes for Spring Term 1961. Associated-Rediffusion." 4.

thought and engaging emotion—in other words, exploring ethics, teaching empathy, deepening the sense of what it is to be human.

A striking difference with the BBC's Greek drama productions for schools is that, whereas *The Angry Gods* placed its exploration of guilt and retribution in a broad and flexible sweep of cultural history, boldly abridging plays to focus young minds on the relevant themes (and to avoid challenging issues such as child-murder and adultery) and making good use of a narrator to assist with navigation between different plays and genres, the BBC, around the same time, employed philosopher Bernard Williams to explore the moral landscapes of its studio productions of Euripides' *Bacchae* and Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, presented in a double bill in the *For Sixth Forms* series. Possibly the differing ages of the intended audience (thirteen plus for *The Angry Gods*; sixteen plus for *Bacchae* and *Philoctetes*) impacted on the choice of approach. But the effect of the two networks' different approaches to the television study of Greek tragedy is, strikingly, noted in an internal BBC memorandum: "ITV programmes were more successful in that they communicated more realistically with the secondary modern audience at which they were aimed." One headmaster put it another way: "either the Corporation does not know how secondary moderns talk or else it uses people who are out of touch with their audience."<sup>19</sup>

### "Sci-Fi Aeschylus": *The Serpent Son* (1979)

Nearly twenty years later, in 1979, the BBC broadcast *The Serpent Son*, a three-part television adaptation of the *Oresteia*, using a translation by Frederic Raphael and Kenneth McLeish. The three parts—*Agamemnon*, *Grave Gifts* (*Libation Bearers*) and *Furies* (*Eumenides*)—were broadcast at 9:25pm on BBC2 on consecutive Wednesdays (lasting 95, 85, and 75 minutes, respectively). The plays were followed, in the style of the ancient satyr play that traditionally came after tragic trilogies, by a thirty-minute "sophisticated modern comedy": the subject of Raphael and McLeish's *Of Mycenae and Men*, directed by Hugh David, is the reunion of Helen (Diana Dors) and Menelaus (Freddie Jones) after the fall of Troy.<sup>20</sup>

19 Memorandum from Kenneth Bird (Midland Region Publicity Officer), 17 February 1959; note from a headmaster (both in T16/64 TV Policy. Education, file 6, 1959, BBC Written Archives Centre).

20 "Commissioning Brief." 17 October 1978, Drama Writer's File: Frederic Raphael, reference T48/487/1, BBC Written Archives Centre.

The director of *The Serpent Son* was Bill Hays. Richard Broke produced, Humphrey Searle composed the music, Tim Harvey designed the set, and the costumes were by Barbara Kidd. In the impressive cast, lead roles were played by Diana Rigg (Klytemnestra), Denis Quilley (Agamemnon), Helen Mirren (Kassandra), Anton Lesser (Orestes), Maureen O'Brien (Elektra), Claire Bloom (Athene), John Nolan (Apollo), and Flora Robson (Kilissa), with Billie Whitelaw and Siân Phillips leading the choruses in *Grave Gifts* and *Furies* respectively. On playing Klytemnestra, Rigg commented: "The modern fashion in acting is understatement, or suggestion, but you can't do Greek drama like that. You have to [...] find the grandeur that existed once—a largeness of expression and spirit which modern texts don't demand. I loved it: every minute of it. The chances to play that sort of part are few and far between."<sup>21</sup>

Director Bills Hays had sought a design aesthetic that was "primitive, barbaric, [...] exotic and ritualistic."<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the production has a bold look; or, as *The Observer* put it, "it is a startling looking production."<sup>23</sup> Make-up Artist Jenny Shircore, who led a team of eighteen assistants, did her research in the British Museum: "I looked around and made notes until I got the general feel of Greek hairstyles and the way they look and then I was able to improvise for the production." The biggest challenge, she reports, were the three Furies, each of which took two hours to make up.<sup>24</sup> As Tony Keen has expressed, although aspects of the costume design took inspiration from ancient Minoan art especially (which was popular in the 1970s), in other ways it relates closely to the science fiction aesthetic of contemporary *Doctor Who*: indeed, Costume Designer Barbara Kidd had also worked on costumes for that television series (as she would again in 2010).<sup>25</sup> The costume design is even more striking than the set (apart from, perhaps, the enormous phallus-shrine of Apollo). Clive James, then television reviewer for *The Observer*, writes:

Dressed simultaneously as the Last of the Mohicans and the First of the Martians, [Quilley as Agamemnon] sported a Sam Browne belt, leather pedal-pushers, dreadlocks and a fringe. [...] he was well equipped with a suit of armour that strongly suggested American football. [...]

Aegisthus also had a bulky carapace, which he seldom took off. It was studded with large nails, or small bollards [...] The top girls looked no less

21 Diana Rigg, quoted in Henry Fenwick, "House of Horror." *Radio Times*, 3 March 1979, 72.

22 Quoted in Henry Fenwick, "House of Horror." *Radio Times*, 3 March 1979, 77.

23 Jonathan Meades, "The Week in View." *The Observer*, 4 March 1979, 20.

24 "Greek Tragedy Challenge for Make-Up." *Ariel: BBC Staff Journal* 183, 21 February 1979, 8.

25 "The Serpent Son (1979): A Science Fiction Aesthetic?" presented at the University of Westminster, June 22, 2012.

remarkable. As Klytemnestra, Diana Rigg had a wardrobe of Pocahontas numbers for day wear. They came with a complete range of Inca, Aztec and Zulu accessories. But it was *en grande tenue* that she really knocked you out. The bodice of her evening gown featured a gold motif that circled each breast before climbing ceilingwards behind her shoulders like a huge menorah. It was a bra mitzvah. [...]

But it was Cassandra who took the biscuit. Helen Mirren played her as an amalgam of Régine, Kate Bush and Carmen Miranda. In a punk hair-style the colour of raw carrots and frock left open all down one side so as to feature a flying panel of her own skin, she did a preparatory rumba around the set before laying her prophecies on the populace. [...] The whole deal looked like a dog's breakfast.<sup>26</sup>

A viewer, writing to the *Radio Times* to say why the production hadn't worked for him, suggested that, although Aeschylus may be "complex and alien," "tragedy isn't sci-fi." "the small screen," he continued, "is for events that can be imagined happening in people's homes, in real places. You can make *Agamemnon* work on TV if it looks like something that could actually have happened."<sup>27</sup> Another viewer, Gladys Hall of Pagham, objected that "the ridiculous and extravagant costumes [...] turned it into a farce. Why not the simple and graceful costumes of Ancient Greece?" On the same Letters page, Producer Richard Broke responded to these criticisms of the "inauthentic" design by pointing out that Aeschylus drew his characters from far distant myths and legends. Other viewers were more positive: R. S. Stanier of Oxford thought it "one of the most adequate English versions of a Greek play I have ever seen," while Helen Tullberg of Monmouth was full of praise: "The standard of adaptation, production and acting have all been amazingly high and I felt the plays come to life as never before."

Also striking is the use of decorative borders around the moving image (by Joanna Bill, credited with Graphics). In *Agamemnon*, for example, they frame flashback sequences, show action occurring inside the palace when the chorus are outside, and highlight particularly important moments in performance, such as when bloody-mouthed Klytemnestra kisses the sword she has used to murder Agamemnon and Cassandra. The use of borders becomes more adventurous as the trilogy progresses: they become mobile, closing in on particular

26 Clive James, "Belfast Dreamer." *The Observer*, 11 March 1979, 20.

27 Letter from Arthur Pritchard of Wakefield in the *Radio Times*, 7 April 1979, 79 (printed under the header "Sci-fi Aeschylus"). Other letters discussed in this paragraph were printed on the same page of the *Radio Times*.

aspects of the action and not always mirroring the rectangular shape of the screen. "I get fed up with the shape of the screen," said Director Bill Hays, "and everyone's reliance on endless close-ups. So I've tried to alter that, focussing the audience's attention in different ways."<sup>28</sup>

*Radio Times* published a four-page feature in advance of the production's broadcast. In this prime-time, large budget context, it is clear that the extravagant level of murder in the trilogy was a selling-point. The article, titled "House of Horror", in fact opens by making reference to the contemporary fascination for horrific family murders. The writer recognises that family conflict is "the stuff of television drama" but notes that, here, it is on "an unmatched and unnerving scale." The feature is light on overtly educational background, but useful context for the social and cultural history comes through the interviews with the translators and the cast, and this is underscored by a few more expository paragraphs on the final page, alongside a family tree of the House of Atreus. The practitioner interviews, in which they relate what they learned through the process of realizing Aeschylean drama, are highly persuasive in extolling the richness of the trilogy.

It was three years earlier, in 1976, that the BBC had commissioned the *Oresteia* translation from the screenwriter and novelist Frederic Raphael and Kenneth McLeish, the writer, playwright and translator who translated all the surviving ancient Greek plays, many of which have been produced professionally.<sup>29</sup> The idea to tackle a trilogy had blossomed in conversation with artist, writer and friend Michael Ayrton who had created many works drawing on the myth of the Minotaur and the labyrinth created by Daedalus; his 1967 autobiographical novel is, in fact, titled *The Maze Maker*. The project "went through several metamorphoses—weaving a new trilogy of plays around the Minotaur legend, re-completing a trilogy that no longer exists." When Ayrton died, the translators decided to revert to the original plan of translating the *Oresteia*, but carrying forward their shared vision: "We had all

28 Quoted in Clive Hodgson and John Wyver, "Classics for Pleasure." *Time Out*, 2 March 1979. See also Henry Fenwick, "House of Horror." *Radio Times*, 3 March 1979, 77.

29 D. A. N. Jones, "Here be Monsters." *The Listener*, 26 July 1979, 2. The translation was published by Cambridge University Press in the same year as the broadcast: on the cover was a colour image of the bloody-mouthed Klytemnestra standing at the edge of an enormous sunken bath, in which Agamemnon's now useless armour floats and around which lie pots and pans and a disturbed carpet showing signs of struggle. The *Oresteia* translation published in the same year by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford, also included production images from *The Serpent Son*.

been to Mycenae separately and all brought back the same sense of a barbaric splendour underlying the tourist package.”<sup>30</sup> It is tempting to think that the recurrent use of a drawing of Orestes’ brain (termed “brain coral” in the camera script), which morphs into a model of a maze where Orestes, shot from above, appears with Apollo, is an homage to Ayrton’s early creative input. The twists and turns of the commission are reflected in the archives. The original agreement with the BBC states that a translation and “modern television version” of the *Oresteia* was required.<sup>31</sup> The commission became *Agamemnon* only, together with Euripides’ *Medea* and Sophocles’ *Antigone*; and in November 1976 they reverted to the original commission to translate the *Oresteia*. In autumn 1978, they agreed to write *Of Mycenae and Men* which followed *The Serpent Son* in the style of a satyr play.<sup>32</sup>

The half-hour comedy *Of Mycenae and Men*, transmitted at 10:15 pm on 23 March 1979, charts the reunion of Helen (played by Diana Dors) and Menelaus (Freddie Jones) after the fall of Troy. Echoing the Watchman figure at the start of *Agamemnon*, it opens with Bob Hoskins as Mr. Taramasalatatopoulos, a servant of Menelaus, walking up and down a veranda—ostensibly sweeping up but managing to keep an eye on what is happening below. On the radio, a very “BBC voice”—played by real-life newsreader Corbet Woodall—declares, “And now for the very late—indeed ancient—news. In Argos, preparations are complete for the return today of lord Agamemnon, Grand Admiral of Greece.”<sup>33</sup> The presence of technological devices such as this radio set and, later, a telephone (dashes of the burlesque clash between ancient setting and modern contrivance) render unnecessary the *Agamemnon*’s series of beacons between Troy and Argos relaying news of the fall of Troy.

As the action unfolds, it becomes clear that the relationship between Menelaus (Freddie Jones) and Helen (Diana Dors) is far from harmonious: “Wouldn’t *you* have left?,” she says to camera at one point. Menelaus urgently wants to consummate their reunion, but all Helen wants is a bath. The bathroom, however, is undergoing work, prompting her to complain that in Troy everything worked smoothly. Menelaus asks why it is taking so long, to which Mr Taramasalatatopoulos replies, “Queen Clytemestra’s gazumped us, m’lord.

30 Henry Fenwick, “House of Horror.” *Radio Times*, 3 March 1979, 72–3.

31 “Commissioning Brief,” 24 February 1976, Drama Writer’s File: Frederic Raphael, reference T48/487/1, BBC Written Archives Centre.

32 In summer 1978, they signed up to write scripts based on Euripides’ *Medea* and *Bacchae*, and Aristophanes’ *Birds*, for a series titled *The Cage of Reason*. These scripts, if indeed they were ever completed, do not seem to have been produced.

33 *Of Mycenae and Men* camera script (BBC Written Archives Centre).

She's having a bathroom fitted in the royal palace." And thus we have a parodic mirror of, and reference to, Agamemnon meeting his death in the bath at the hands of his wife Clytemnestra. In a *Carry On*-esque scene in which Menelaus' rising desire is countered, but not thwarted, by Helen's weary rebuttal, he recalls how, when he first saw her in Troy, her beauty overpowered his desire to punish her:

MENELAUS. You minx, you thought yourself about to die, and bared your breast to my brazen blade and cried "Go ahead and do it!"

HELEN. And you went ahead and did it, and did it, and did it ...

MENELAUS. At the sight of those golden globes, fair Aphrodite's fruits, stayed my hand ...

HELEN. They may have stayed your *hand* ...

Kassandra (Annette Crosbie) enters, wailing and announcing, as in *Agamemnon*, "Death in the palace! Ancient chickens coming home to roost!" When she warns "Beware the bathhouse!," Menelaus says as an aside to Mr Taramasalatatopoulos, "She couldn't be the plumber could she?" "Nah," he responds, "he's coming Monday, squire, he promised." Soon Menelaus, realising she has the wrong house, tells her, "Er, they're up the road," referring to Agamemnon's palace. 'I'll just give Clytie a call," Helen says, asking the operator for "Mycenae 121." "What do you mean he's feeling out of sorts? He's just conquered Troy!," Helen says to her sister. To Menelaus, she says, "Aggy's feeling a bit stiff after his journey" (an allusion, for the audience, to his *rigor mortis*). "He's not the only one," Menelaus wearily replies, alluding to his own predicament. Eventually, they quarrel and he phones Paris: "Take her back. She's all yours!"

*Of Mycenae and Men* is amusing, but it is difficult to see it working unless the viewer has just seen *The Serpent Son* or has pre-knowledge of the myth. Perhaps surprisingly, it made it into the *Radio Times Guide to TV Comedy* where Mark Lewisohn classifies it as a sitcom—and a "one-off oddity."<sup>34</sup> Peter Fiddick, reviewing it in *The Guardian* (24 March 1979), considered that:

it did have its moments with Bob Hoskins as the slave [...] there was the right sense of hair being let down but an equal sense that they were having to do it in a pretty ordinary sitcom. *Carry On Up the Peloponnese*.

The comedy was clearly set up as a light-hearted antidote to the serious, stupendous, science fiction *Serpent Son*. As much as the trilogy was strikingly, purposefully alien in its production choices, the “pretty ordinary” comedy was familiar, cosy even, stuffed full of easy laughs and those seventies battle-of-the-sexes jokes. The mariticide is in the comedy related in a telephone conversation (“Aggy’s feeling a bit stiff”)—and both misinterpreted and made light of with sexual innuendo, thus distracting the viewer’s gaze from *The Serpent Son*’s striking, unsettling image of Klytmenestra, bloody-mouthed, kissing the sword with which she has murdered her husband and Cassandra. The costume design is also much more akin to the traditional Grecian aesthetic in twentieth-century film, television and theatre—“the simple and graceful costumes of Ancient Greece” which Gladys Hall had wished for in the *Radio Times*. The disjunction between *The Serpent Son* and its cousin *Of Mycenae and Men* prompts the question: is Greek tragedy better done as alien, outlandish, and somewhat incomprehensible or in the safe familiarity of the toga? The audience and the critics, it seems, were divided on this.

### ‘Art Television’: The National Theatre’s *Oresteia* (1983)

Twenty or so years after ITV had transmitted Sophocles’ *Electra* in modern Greek, the second reconfiguration of a theatre production of Greek drama for British television was shown by Channel 4, less than a year after the network was established.<sup>35</sup> Whereas *Electra* had posed a *linguistic* challenge for the audience in 1962, Channel 4’s 1983 *Oresteia*—a televised version of the National Theatre’s 1981 all-male, masked production directed by Peter Hall—was challenging in terms of its sheer length, running for over 4½ hours on the evening of Sunday 9 October.

This viewing marathon was prefaced by two accompanying programmes. On 4 October, a special edition of the series *Today’s History*, titled *The Weight of the Past*, connected themes of the *Oresteia* with “modern instances of revenge as a route to justice,” asking “how a society ever emerges from feuds to the rule of law,” and using, as illustration, extracts from the films *Padre, Padrone* (1977), directed by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, and *Handgun* (1982), written and directed by Tony Garnett.<sup>36</sup> On 8 October, the one-hour documentary *The Oresteia at Epidaurus* featured the National Theatre’s tour to Greece in 1982 when it performed *Oresteia* as the first ever non-Greek-language production of a Greek

35 On *Electra*, see Wrigley 2015b.

36 “Channel Four Television: Press Information, 1–7 October 1983.” Channel 4 Archive.



play in the ancient theatre of Epidauros. Andrew Snell's documentary deftly weaves together an enjoyable and accessible introduction to the issues of the trilogy, ancient performance conventions and modern production choices through interviews with director Peter Hall, translator Tony Harrison, composer Harrison Birtwistle, designer Jocelyn Herbert, classical scholar Oliver Taplin and several actors, including Greg Hicks and Tony Robinson (who was, around this time, becoming well known as Baldrick in the British historical sitcom *Blackadder*).

Much of the commentary in the first part of the documentary focuses on masks, with Peter Hall and Jocelyn Herbert offering thoughts on their power and utility on the stage and the actors discussing how they found ways of working with them in rehearsal. The second half is largely concerned with Tony Harrison's muscular and rhythmical translation: Harrison, giving an interview sitting beneath a tree at the ancient site of Mycenae, talks about the nature of the play; this is endorsed and elaborated on by Oliver Taplin. Extracts from the production are then shown: of the final rehearsal, the theatre filling up at the first performance, significant moments from the production, and the rapturous standing ovation from the 15,000-strong audience.

In this way, the potentially daunting 4½-hour masked *Oresteia* is broken down, explained and made approachable. It was not unusual for the BBC to accompany 'highbrow' cultural broadcasts with such explanatory programming, and early Channel 4 was clearly, in its own way, doing a similar thing with the *Oresteia*. In fact, Channel 4 was committed to making 15% of programmes count as education: in addition to overtly educational programming (for example, on adult literacy), recalls Naomi Sargant, the Senior Commissioning Editor for Educational Programming at Channel 4, "we wrapped around and provided run-up and follow-up material, for instance, you made an educational happening around arts broadcasts, with programme notes and a documentary. [...] One example was an arts broadcast such as the National Theatre's production of *The Oresteia*."<sup>37</sup>

... to provide a distinctive service; to innovate in form and content; to deal with interests and groups not served by commercial television, or perhaps any television; to draw programmes from a wider range of production sources than those which constituted the existing industry.<sup>38</sup>

37 Sargant 1999, 139.

38 Kustow 1987.

In October 1983 Channel 4 was, of course, in its infancy. Launched on 2 November 1982, the network had chosen to focus its arts resources on actual performance—"the big event"—in deliberate contrast with the long-running arts and culture series *Arena* and *Omnibus* (BBC, from 1975 and 1967 respectively) and *The South Bank Show* (ITV, from 1978).<sup>39</sup> "We attached a high priority to the arts," recalls Jeremy Isaacs, the founding Chief Executive: "we couldn't help but be distinctive in doing so, since no one else did."<sup>40</sup> This encompassed Sunday afternoon opera and the Royal Shakespeare Company's theatre production of *Nicholas Nickleby*, Bill Bryden's *The Mysteries* from the National and Peter Brook's *Mahabharata*. Many of these were commissioned by Michael Kustow, Commissioning Editor for the Arts, who had previously worked at the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company: he recalls seeking "not television about the arts, but art television."<sup>41</sup> His goals were, on the one hand, to "keep alive heightened expression, poetry in speech and classic form," and, on the other, for these works to reach new audiences:

Reaching half a million people, a derisory number in television rating terms but three times the number that saw the *Oresteia* at the Olivier Theatre, means that some of those viewers are plunged into a classic for the first time. And if there's a marriage between the visual language and performance style of the theatre work and the codes of television, those viewers may stay tuned. And if you back the thing up with informative documentary and print, as we did with the *Oresteia* and *The Mysteries*, you may have opened new interests and appetites people didn't know they possessed. Because they are cumulative over the years, these things are difficult to measure on television's "appreciation index."<sup>42</sup>

Oliver Taplin has reflected on how this theatre production attempted to reflect the importance of music, rhythm, and tone in the play's ancient performance through an energetic dynamic between Harrison's words and Birtwistle's music. The stage performances excelled in "momentum, pace, dynamic, rhythm—a constant sense of dramatic urgency and forward movement," making a potent feature of, for example, the non-naturalist Greek dramatic convention

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39 Isaacs 1989, 168–9.

40 Isaacs 2006, 359.

41 "Prime-Time Piffle: 25 Years of Channel 4." *The Independent*, 5 September 2007.

42 Kustow 1987, 17–8.

of stichomythia via the muscular rhymes and percussive score.<sup>43</sup> To what extent did such characteristic aspects of this powerful stage production successfully translate to television?

Three full performances in the Olivier Theatre were captured on four cameras, resulting in twelve full-length recordings which took Peter Hall a long time to edit. The Channel 4 production was also available for purchase from an American educational supplier on three, expensive VHS tapes, suggesting that they were considered to have an educational utility alongside their landmark theatrical status. The television version (which, along with the documentary, is accessible in the Royal National Theatre Archive) opens with the caption "*The Oresteia* Trilogy by Aeschylus" followed by the names of the translator, designer, composer and director shown in white letters against a slow panning shot, from below, across the audience who are waiting for the performance. Viewers who watched the previous evening's documentary had heard that the Olivier's design had been modelled on the ancient theatre at Epidauros,<sup>44</sup> and so the perspective and subject of this shot is designed to underline the correspondence between ancient and modern theatre space, whilst the panning shot of the seated, chattering audience mirrors a similar shot of the Epidauros audience in the documentary (the significant difference being, of course, that the open-air performance began in the light of early evening, whilst the television version is shot inside a closed performance space).

The camera switches perspective: it is now high up, looking down, past rows of audience either side of the stairs, towards the stage which is in darkness apart from a spotlight on one tiny figure, situated high up—the Watchman. The caption "Part 1. Agamemnon" appears quickly and fades, the lights dim, and we move to a close-up of the Watchman—a perspective which, of course, would not have been possible for the theatre audience. His opening speech given in David Roper's strong Bradford accent is captivating and funny in places. He appears to be speaking directly to camera, with striking and good use of gesture and head movement, making for an arresting start.

On the Watchman's exit, Birtwistle's score accompanies the *parodos*, the traditional entry of the chorus. Here for the first time we get a rare glimpse of the full extent of the set which, with its large circular playing space and raised level at the back, echoes elements of ancient theatres. The chorus break into their ode, their rhythmically delivered lines punctuated throughout by the percussive elements of the score. The camera shots often take their cue

43 Taplin 2005.

44 See [www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/your-visit/national-theatre-venues/olivier-theatre](http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/your-visit/national-theatre-venues/olivier-theatre) (accessed 27 July 2016).

from the line breaks in Harrison's text, sometimes making for a rapid succession of similar shots which, although they keep pace with the lines and music, are not sufficiently differentiated to be as engaging as the television viewer might like. Close-ups of the members of the Chorus sometimes show glimpses of lips moving through the mask's mouthpiece and torsos inflating with the breath required to keep up with the energetic script which is chanted and sung at points. Despite these small signs of life beneath the near-identical masks and extremely similar costumes (in shades of grey and brown), the continuing focus on the gently moving figures and immobile mask-faces lends a very static character to this opening choral ode. Some shots of the audience, to whom they are speaking, or the whole stage, would have helped to open things up; a little more movement would have energised proceedings even more. The use of such a rapid sequence of shots, selected from the recordings made by the four variously located cameras, also lends a sense of slight dislocation, with the chorus, for example, seeming to look in many different directions from line to line.

Enter Clytemnestra: the chorus scatters as the palace doors open and she walks forward. The actor Philip Donaghy's male body and voice in a feminine dress, walk and stance effectively engages with the way Aeschylus portrays Clytemnestra as a woman with masculine qualities. (Harrison renders this as "That woman's a man the way she gets moving" and "You feel like a woman but talk like a man talks"). When Agamemnon's chariot enters swiftly, followed by Cassandra in a cage, things liven up even more: the camera pulls back as the chariot swings around the circular playing space and the shape of the stage and the lights above serve as indisputable signs that we are in a theatre, injecting welcome energy into the production.

The scene between Clytemnestra and Agamemnon, in which she persuades him to risk *hybris* by walking into the palace on a fine purple tapestry, despite his gut instinct otherwise, is powerful. While they engage in *stichomythia* at the climax of their discussion, the camera and score work beautifully together to punctuate the shifts from one shot to another. As Agamemnon moves slowly towards the doors of the palace—where he will imminently meet his death—the camera moves back and forth between close-ups of his bare feet on the tapestry, the watching Chorus, and Clytemnestra. The effect is reminiscent of the eyes of a theatre-goer darting back and forth between the different performance forces and elements on stage—but in a more formal and stylised way, choreographed by the regularity of Birtwistle's percussive music.

The cameras' various close-ups of the immobile mask, the text of the play, and the score work in real harmony at many other points. When Agamemnon and Cassandra are being murdered in the palace, the camera moves from mask

to mask amongst the Chorus. Their immobility and the lack of accompanying gesture or movement underscores the fixed nature of the Chorus in the *orchestra*, the circular playing space (since Greek tragic convention dictates that they do not enter the stage building, and indeed they rarely take any actual action), and at this point it works particularly well to emphasize their sense of fear and impotence in the face of the murders Clytemnestra is enacting within the palace. In addition to the Chorus' static poses and immobile heads, a pause of a couple of seconds follows on from the line "And every man should say what he thinks is the safest plan." In other words, no-one knows or wants to say what ought to happen next. They are utterly frozen.

The corpses of Agamemnon and Cassandra are, again according to ancient convention, wheeled out through the palace doors on a low platform (the *ekkyklema* in Greek) for the Chorus, and the audience, to see. The camera here enables us to look upon the corpses, entangled in a net like fish, more closely than the theatregoer, as it had with Agamemnon's feet treading on the tapestry on his way into the palace. There are sexual undertones here, with Agamemnon's left forearm erect, the lifeless Cassandra lying between his legs and an enlivened Clytemnestra's ecstatic rendition of the lines:

He lay there gasping and splurting his blood out  
 Spraying me with dark blood-dew, dew I delight in  
 As much as the graincrop in the fresh gloss of rainfall  
 When the wheatbud's in labour and swells into birthpang.

She becomes angry, condemning him as "Shagamemnon, shameless, shaft-happy, ogler and grinder of Troy's golden girlhood," ramming home the sense of betrayal she feels at his bringing Cassandra home as concubine, on top of the profound loss of their daughter Iphigenia, slain by his hand. In this scene, the fixed camera shot, with occasional close-ups, works powerfully: there is, simply, nowhere else one would wish to look.

Critical opinion of the television production was polarised. John Naughton, in *The Listener*, considered that "although one could guess at the theatrical impact of the stage production, it didn't work on the box. It was like looking at great events through a keyhole, or the wrong end of a telescope: interesting, but distant."<sup>45</sup> Lynne Truss of *The Times Educational Supplement* was similarly disappointed: "it is a pity that [...] there is not more sense of it as a theatrical event. There are few shots of the whole stage (so the groupings of the chorus

45 John Naughton, "Television: Crescendos in the Living-Room." *The Listener*, 13 October 1983.

are sometimes missed), there are no shots of the musicians, and, saddest of all, there is no applause at the end. In the Epidaurus [documentary], the enthusiastic reception is thrilling.”<sup>46</sup> Robin Buss, writing in the same periodical, had more general criticism of the network’s scheme to put big cultural events on the small screen: “if C4 wants to commit hara-kiri, this is a safe, even a noble way to do it. Culture is not popular, but it is non-controversial and everyone knows that is *a good thing*. C4 appears to have decided that [...] its suicide note will take the form of a pious condemnation of our philistine disregard for Greek drama.”<sup>47</sup>

Those who were left deeply impressed often had praise for the technical aspects of the production. Michael Wood, writing in *New Society*, considered that:

rather than simply being recorded for/by television it has been genuinely translated, given a new and different life by fluent photography and fast, imaginative editing. We rarely see the whole stage, for example. The camera moves from face to face (from mask to mask), waiting only the length of a line or a cadence, picking up groupings of the chorus, now one, now two, now five heads, framing two protagonists as they quarrel, cutting to silent characters for their gestures of reaction, putting Agamemnon’s foot in a giant close-up as he steps on the purple cloth which will lead him to his murder. [...] The result is not only that television sees the plays for us, chooses emphases not available to a theatre audience, but that something like a musical dimension is added. [...] Everything in Hall’s production—words used, rhythms of speech, stylised gestures, unmoving masks, pauses, silences—helps us to see not what these characters feel but what their tactical and formal position is: the father-murdering mother faces the mother-slaying son.<sup>48</sup>

The freedom that Peter Hall gave the camera operators impressed some critics. Hall is quoted as saying, “There was no shooting script. I’d say, shoot what interests you. You’re free. They were fascinated and had a great deal of fun.”<sup>49</sup>

46 Lynne Truss, “Masked Celebration.” *The Times Educational Supplement*, 7 October 1983.

47 Robin Buss, “The Gadfly Grows Wary.” *The Times Educational Supplement*, 4 November 1983, 20.

48 Michael Wood, “Family at War.” *New Society*, 6 October 1983, 19.

49 Quoted in Julian Barnes, “Delving into Dr Newman’s Casebook.” *The Observer*, 16 October 1983; see also Alix Coleman, “Happy Tale of a Greek Tragedy.” *TV Times*, 8 October 1983, 76–8.

Julian Barnes considered that "The masks (no longer dampening the actors' delivery, as in the theatre) were a great success: the camera prowled from one to another, shifting the angle of vision, cutting away suddenly, and giving these formal disguises an immediacy and flexibility beyond that available to the static viewer in the stalls."<sup>50</sup> Suzie Mackenzie's write-up in *Time Out* offers perhaps the most balanced assessment of all:

this epic rendering [...] adds as much as it loses to the original experience. It is still Harrison's verse that carries you through and the masks still possess that eerie quality of actually transmitting emotions to the audience. But most obviously the sweeping *mise en scène* of Peter Hall's original production is replaced by an attention to nuance that is impossible without the focus of a camera and editing. Prepare yourself for a marathon and submit to the natural pull of television. This is one occasion when the concentrated intimacy of the box is a real plus.<sup>51</sup>

### Conclusion

These three productions of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* are representative of the broader ways that television has contributed to the forging of a new, public identity for ancient Greece in twentieth-century Britain. Broadcasters brought these performative engagements with Aeschylus within the scope of a massive number of viewers, both those watching at home and those in the classroom, a significant proportion of whom may not have encountered the *Oresteia* (or any other Greek tragedies) before.

*The Angry Gods* (1961) presented the trilogy within a purposefully educational framework for its intended audience of pupils in mainly secondary moderns, offering various ways into the plays—via a narrator figure (a usefully pedagogic stand-in for those many teachers who themselves had no experience of Greek tragedy), links with more recent cultural history, and discussions of dramatic conventions, mythological background and the broad themes of guilt and retribution that were the focus of the series. The intention was not purely pedagogic in a narrow sense; rather, programme-makers aspired to encourage empathy and explore ethics, leading to a deeper sense of humanity and appreciation, possibly, of the humanities. Even the BBC privately acknowledged that

50 Julian Barnes, "Delving into Dr Newman's Casebook." *The Observer*, 16 October 1983, 52.

51 Suzie Mackenzie, writing in *Time Out*, 6 October 1983.

Associated-Rediffusion in this way communicated much more realistically and successfully with its audience.

The large-scale and larger-than-life 1979 BBC *The Serpent Son* offered a grand interpretation of the *Oresteia*. The bold, innovative design—with a touch of science fiction aesthetic and innovative graphics framing the action—sought to surprise and even alienate the viewer in a productive way: it resisted the urge to domesticate the Greeks in favour of underlining the horror inscribed in the family dramas of their myths, thus making a clearer case for justice and the rule of law within communities. As much as the trilogy was strikingly, purposefully alien and outlandish in its production choices, the comic follow-up, *Of Mycenae and Men*, offered Greeks not only in familiar, graceful togas but also revelling in reassuringly typical British gags. The lavishly illustrated four-page spread in the advance issue of the *Radio Times* suggests that the BBC was cognisant that ancient Greek tragedy overlaid with outlandish aesthetics might be too much for the viewer: here the tone is not mere communication of background and dramatic themes, but a sideways approach to the dramas through the perspective of practitioners—from translator to director to actor—documenting what *they* had learned through their encounter with Aeschylus (but not neglecting the basic usefulness of a device such as a family tree).

Four years later, Channel 4 made more sophisticated use of the perspective of the practitioner in one of the pre-*Oresteia* documentaries: in taking the viewer on tour with the National Theatre's *Oresteia* team to the ancient theatre of Epidaurus, the second documentary permitted many rich connections to be made between ancient performance conventions and spaces and their modern equivalents. The prevalence of voices from practitioners who held positions of cultural authority enabled a rich set of perspectives on how such an unusual production as this came to develop its various performance languages—for example, translation, score, masks, and proxemics. Channel 4 arguably succeeded with this and its other “big event” arts productions to bring performances from the best of the nation's companies to a mass television audience. The status of the original, indeed canonical, stage production in the case of the *Oresteia*, is indicated by the strong feeling in those reviews which found more to criticise than celebrate in the television version's aesthetics, on the one hand, and its broader and more diverse audience base, on the other.

The act of putting Aeschylus on the television, in all three of these varied broadcasting contexts, was understood to require the communication of associated lexicons and frames of reference in order that a good proportion of the many-headed viewing audience had the chance to find a way into and around the meaning of the ancient plays and how these meanings might relate to the



concerns of contemporary social, cultural, and political life. Aeschylean television may have been only a rare event in Britain, but the few productions of his plays that have been broadcast illustrate the bold and rich diversity of ways that the medium engaged with, and engaged its viewers with, Greek tragedy in performance.<sup>52</sup>

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## Orestes on Trial in Africa: Pasolini's *Appunti per un' Orestiade Africana* and Sissako's *Bamako*

Tom Hawkins

### Introduction

Africaisntacountry.com and africaisacountry.com, despite the apparent contradiction in their names, are both websites dedicated to challenging the lingering colonial habit of referring to Africa as if it were a unified whole rather than a diverse assemblage of nations. Such homogenizing language creates a variety of problems, among the worst of which is the effective denial of the independence movements that transferred political control of African countries away from European colonial powers throughout the 20th century.<sup>1</sup> The question of continent vs. nations seems to present an ethical crux rooted in recognizing or denying the cultural uniqueness of African sub-groups, yet both continents and national borders are human constructs. Other geographical features may provide more natural, objective organizing principles (such as the Mediterranean basin, the Pacific Rim, sub-Saharan Africa, or the American West) or super-structures (such as the Eurasian landmass that spans two continents and a sub-continent or the Thermohaline Circulation system of the oceans). The emphasis on national identities and boundaries not only derives from a specific political framework, but also privileges the political organization of Africa that was established primarily by European colonial powers. In some cases, the ill-fit between national boundaries and tribal, ethnic, or religious fault-lines has added to the complexities of navigating post-colonial independence.

In this chapter I analyze two films that perpetuate the image of Africa as a unified whole, though they do this, I suggest, in ways that do not fit the simple model of persistent colonial habits decried by the websites mentioned above. Both films also adapt Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, with a particular emphasis on the

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1 Excepting Liberia, which was newly established as an independent country in 1847, the majority of African countries gained independence between 1910 and 1980 when South Africa and Zimbabwe, respectively, gained their independence from Britain. Namibia and Eritrea gained their independence from other African nations (South Africa and Ethiopia) in the 1990s

themes of *Eumenides*. Pier Palo Pasolini's *Appunti per un' Orestiaide africana* ("Notes on an African *Oresteia*") is a thorough-going Aeschylean project, though by presenting itself as a series of notes (*appunti*), it also frustrates expectations that it might be an adaptation in any straightforward way. In addition to moving from the medium of theater to that of film, Pasolini's title declares a generic shift toward a disjointed, un-unified, and un-finalized style of presentation. Abderrahmane Sissako's *Bamako*, on the other hand, makes no open declaration of any reliance on Aeschylus—and I readily admit that the reception of Aeschylus may be a matter of my understanding of the film rather than any directorial intention—, but its overlay of a simple story of a family's disintegration with a surreal courtroom drama brings the motifs of the *Oresteia*'s first two episodes into closer engagement with the trilogy's conclusion than could be imagined on the ancient Athenian stage.<sup>2</sup>

My argument is that both Pasolini and Sissako use the image of a unified Africa as a means of resisting the history of the Western-style nation-state in hopes of reframing "The African Question" not so much as a matter of various states striving to attain the stability and legitimacy of the former colonial powers, but rather of seeing the entire region as engaged in a process (perhaps as a series of parallel processes) in which globalization seems to hold out the promise of allowing Africa to move into a wholly new era of political history.<sup>3</sup> Whereas Pasolini is bullish and projects an optimism that the colonial period of African history can give way to a de-colonialized, democratic neo-capitalism, Sissako clearly laments that assurances of post-colonial amelioration have slouched into fiscal neo-colonialism from which Africa (*tout court*) can expect no help from the West. In both films, the Aeschylean trial of Orestes looms large. Pasolini sees in it the model of an anthropological paradigm shift that brought ancient Athens out of primitivism and into a modernity of its own shaping—a wholesale transformation of society that parallels the social

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2 Harrow 2013, 195 describes the trial "as a kind of dream that permits the unheard voices and unseen events of the past crimes to be evoked ..."

3 The African Question, as it is articulated by African intellectuals, is the challenge of bringing African nations to a new level of prosperity and stability. This is often discussed in terms of narrative control. Thabo Mbeki, in a lecture delivered at the University of South Africa in 2013, put it this way, in reference to pre-election propaganda in Zimbabwe earlier that year that pre-emptively lamented the possibility of electoral corruption: "this is very worrying because what it means is that we, as Africans, don't know enough about ourselves and continue to be enslaved by a narrative about ourselves [African corruption that leads to electoral unreliability] told by other people." Mbeki's lecture is reprinted in the online journal *New Africa* (Sept. 18, 2013). Chinua Achebe, in an interview in the *Paris Review* (Winter 1994, no. 133) made a similar point in more evocative terms: "... until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter."

upheaval of newly independent African nations—a transformation that these nations can navigate well or badly. For Sissako, however, such empowered readings of Orestes' trial have no place on African soil, and his adaptation of these Aeschylean themes leads to a debunking of the rhetoric and mythology of Western-style global prosperity.<sup>4</sup>

### Pasolini's Decolonialized Neocapitalism

In 1969, Pasolini spent several weeks filming in Tanzania and Uganda, which had gained their independence from Britain in 1961 and 1962, respectively. His *Appunti*, released in 1970, but not publicly screened until 1973, presents the viewer with a strange experience that may most closely resemble a documentary, though Pasolini himself resists this label.<sup>5</sup> In the opening shot, we hear Pasolini's voice and see his reflection as he stands outside the window of a bookstore. He says: "I chose, for Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, an African nation which seemed typical to me."<sup>6</sup> A socialist nation with pro-Chinese tendencies, as you can see. But this choice is not yet definitive, because as well as the attraction to China, there is another, no less fascinating attraction: America. Or, to put it better, neocapitalism."<sup>7</sup> His camera reiterates this contrast as it focuses first on a man offering pamphlets about China and featuring a picture of Mao and then cuts to a shot of the sign outside the African American Institute followed

4 Pasolini's grand and sweeping reading of the *Oresteia* is also out of step with some trends in contemporary classical scholarship. For a quick overview of the pitfalls of understanding *Eumenides* as a triumphalist hymn to Athenian democracy and progress, see Goldhill 1997, 137–9; Decreus 2000 surveys critiques of Eurocentrism in scholarship on the trilogy.

5 As Pasolini takes up the genre of the production in his narration of the opening scene, he says: "I have come to film, but to film what? Not a documentary or a film. I have come to film notes for a film. This film would be the *Oresteia* by Aeschylus, filmed in the Africa of today, in modern Africa." (Pasolini 2001, 1177: "Sono venuto evidentemente a girare, ma a girare che cosa? Non un documentario, non un film, sono venuto a girare degli appunti per un film: questo film sarebbe l'*Orestide* di Eschilo, da girarsi nell' Africa di oggi, nell' Africa moderna"). For quotations from the film, I have lightly adapted the published English subtitles (e.g. replacing the awkward "philo-Chinese" with "pro-Chinese"). The Italian screenplay can be found in Pasolini 2001, 1177–204.

6 He does not make it clear at this point that we are in Dar es Salaam.

7 Pasolini 2001, 1177: "Ho scelto per l'*Orestide* di Eschilo una nazione Africana che mi sembra tipica, una nazione socialista a tendenze, come vedete, filo-cinesi, ma la cui scelta non è ancora evidentemente definitiva, perché accanto all'attrattiva cinese c'è un'altra attrattiva non meno affascinante: l'americana, o per meglio dire neocapitalista."

by images of household appliances lined up and displayed for sale. This initial sequence soon fades as Pasolini leads us in new directions, but it provides the modern point of reference upon which his entire understanding of Aeschylus and his own cinematographic project depends: namely Pasolini's vision of the opportunity for African nations, at the moment of leaving behind their "primitive" and "tribal" past, to embrace socialism and reject what he sees as the soulless consumerism of capitalism.

After this brief opening, the first extended sequence meanders through various locations—arable fields, the markets and schools in Kigoma, and a factory in Dar es Salaam—while Pasolini comments on the people, social spaces, and natural vistas he encounters. He lingers on faces and comments on the viability of casting the people he meets in the roles of Aeschylus' plays.<sup>8</sup> He intersperses readings from his own translation of Aeschylus' trilogy and musings on anthropology and politics. Although he does not seem to have had any intention of directing a straight-forward Aeschylean adaptation in Africa, "he auditions the continent for a non-professional cast and location for his would-be production."<sup>9</sup> This is made most obvious in his aspirations to have the people of Africa play the part of a protagonist-chorus. His Marxist interest in workers and students seems at times to deemphasize the individuals whom he encounters in favor of the overwhelming ambiance of his travels: he finds several Agamemnons, each of whom would do well enough; Orestes can be found in virtually any young male student in modern attire; there are no Electras whatsoever, since African women are simply too blithe, and "it seems as if they don't know how to do anything but laugh,"<sup>10</sup> which thus disqualifies them from fulfilling this angry and obsessive role; and at one point, captivated by the very landscape itself, he suggests that a stand of trees could take on the role of the Furies.

Having thus dealt with matters of casting, the scene next shifts to Rome, where Pasolini (now in front of the camera moderating a discussion, rather than behind it) interviews a group of African students studying at the University of Rome. He begins by explaining his reasons for undertaking his Aeschylean project:

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- 8 In several cases, we can clearly see that Pasolini is filming people speak, but he never allows their voices to be heard. This strong directorial control effectively silences his 'cast' and ensures that we only hear his voice, his version of what Aeschylus' narrative can mean in an African context.
- 9 Usher 2014, 113. Pasolini's murder in 1975 cut his career short, leaving it at least conceivable that these *Notes* were truly a precursor to another project.
- 10 Pasolini 2001, 1178: "Pare che non sappiano fare altro che ridere ..."

The profound essential reason is this: I feel I can recognize some analogies between the situation of the *Oresteia* and the situation of Africa today, especially concerning the transformation of the Furies, the Erinyes, into the Eumenides. In other words, I mean that the tribal civilization seems to me to resemble archaic Greek civilization, and Orestes' discovery of democracy, carrying it then into his country, which could be Argos in the tragedy and Africa in my film, is in a sense the discovery of democracy that Africa has also made in these last few years.<sup>11</sup>

This preamble prompts his first question for the students: whether his project should be set in contemporary Africa (of the late 60s) or if it would be better suited to the 1950s. It is completely appropriate for a director to be concerned with such matters, but in light of how he introduced the conversation, it is hard not to suspect that Pasolini believes he has pinpointed an epoch-changing shift and is trying to determine as accurately as possible the precise moment when primitive tribal Africa gave way to its modern and democratic offspring. The first student to respond engages directly with Pasolini's question, but the second, an Ethiopian-speaking Italian and wearing a pale turtleneck, resists the director's claim to be speaking about all of Africa: "Africa is not a nation; it is a continent."<sup>12</sup> And the third student, who speaks in French and who turns Pasolini's formula around by reminding him that no one would speak of Italy as a unified whole in a discussion involving only the people of Cagliari, warns about the pitfalls of focusing too much on African tribalism, and he asserts the heuristic value of looking at race rather than tribes. Pasolini responds by reasserting the importance of his tribal focus, since the borders of African nations were drawn by the "European masters."<sup>13</sup> It is at this point that he puts

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11 Pasolini 2001, 1181: "La ragione essenziale, profonda, è questa: che mi sembra di riconoscere delle analogie fra la situazione dell'*Orestide* e quella dell'Africa di oggi, soprattutto dal punto di vista della trasformazione delle Erinni in Eumenidi. Cioè, mi sembra che la civiltà tribale Africana assomigli alla civiltà arcaica greca. E la scoperta che fa Oreste della democrazia, portandola poi nel suo paese, che sarebbe Argo nella tragedia e l'Africa nel mio film, è, in un certo senso—diciamo così—, la scoperta della democrazia che ha fatto l'Africa in questi ultimi anni." Pasolini's reading of Aeschylus here closely parallels that of Thompson 1941, who comments that *Eumenides* depicts Athena "leading mankind from barbarism to civilization" (264) and "the growth of law through successive stages of social evolution" (269). Such an interpretation may not fit current scholarly trends among classicists, but Usher 2014 has demonstrated how influential Thompson's book and his progressivist perspective was on Pasolini.

12 Pasolini 2001, 1181: "L'Africa ... non è una nazione, ma è un continente."

13 Pasolini 2001, 1182: "padroni europei."

forward his notion of “formal democracy,”<sup>14</sup> which is symbolized in ancient Athens at the trial of Orestes by the first ever court of humans and which has become the reality for African nations due to the process of de-colonialization. This formal democracy now needs to be infused with some real political substance—the choice between Chinese socialism and American neo-capitalism he had set out in the opening sequence. This panel of the film closes with two students expressing their doubts about the validity of Pasolini’s project. Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* just doesn’t seem to have much to do with the realities of modern Africa, they claim.<sup>15</sup> It is a strange and wonderful twist that Pasolini chose to keep the footage from this interview, since the majority of it is strikingly critical.<sup>16</sup>

Pasolini next presents the general contours of the *Oresteia* in a series of differently styled “notes.” He sets the scene by finding someone to play the part of the Watchman who opens *Agamemnon* and by reading the Aeschylean description of the signal fires announcing the fall of Troy while his camera focuses on burning fields. Next comes a flashback to the Trojan War itself, where newsreel footage of the Biafran War represents the events around Troy (surprisingly with Thersites in charge of training the Greek troops).<sup>17</sup> These “searingly direct images”<sup>18</sup> are sparsely narrated and present a graphic and moving expression of the human cost of war. Pasolini justifies the aesthetically discordant juxtaposition of Greek mythological narratives and modern war footage with the claim that “suffering, death, mourning, tragedy are eternal,”<sup>19</sup> and this synchronic perspective allows him to see the situation of contemporary Africa as repeating a timeless moment of cultural development that parallels the alleged anthropological importance of Aeschylus’ tale. He then interrupts this

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14 Pasolini 2001, 1183: “la democrazia formale” as opposed to “la reale democrazia” (original emphasis).

15 Wetmore 2003, 32 makes a similar point: “In seeking to construct the *Oresteia* in terms of Africa, he [Pasolini] ultimately constructs Africa in terms of the *Oresteia*.”

16 Greene 2012, 221 notes several formal aspects of this scene, such as Pasolini’s body being only partially visible, that suggest a deliberate awkwardness: “This interview method not only places both Pasolini and the students in a physically estranged position in relation to each other, but the interview amounts to the author attempting to place into quotations the comments of the African students.”

17 The Biafran War (1967–1970) was a Nigerian civil war precipitated by the attempted secession of the Biafran region of southern Nigeria. The war, infamous for the Igbo genocide, ended with Nigerian forces, with strong British support, suppressing the Biafran rebels.

18 Pasolini 2001, 1185: “immagini brucianti di attualità ...”

19 Pasolini 2001, 1185: “... il dolore, la morte, il lutto, la tragedia, sono elementi eterni ...”



train of thought with “a sudden idea”<sup>20</sup> of presenting the *Oresteia* through the idiom of free jazz. With brief introduction, he sets up Cassandra’s scene, which plays out as a wild and improvisational musical experiment that captures the mad prophetess’ ecstatic incomprehensibility beautifully, particularly in the atonal interactions between the vocal lines and Gato Barbieri’s wailing saxophone. The long shot of the musicians playing in an otherwise deserted club eventually fades and we watch more news footage of a man, blindfolded and tied to a tree, being executed by firing squad—a grim and understated moment that stands for the killing of Agamemnon.

The next “note,” with the jazz still lingering in the background, shows how Pasolini would depict Electra’s arrival at her father’s grave, as he gets a family to show how they bring offerings to the grave of a relative. Without any stark visual transition (although the jazz begins anew), Pasolini announces that the next ‘note’ (which seems to be a continuation of what precedes) is shot “as if it were the real scene of my film”<sup>21</sup> and depicts Orestes’ arrival at Agamemnon’s grave. Interestingly, no “note” represents the killing of Clytemnestra, and we jump to Orestes being hounded by the Furies, shown as a tempestuous wind among the trees and a fevered pitch of jazz abstraction.

With the *Libation Bearers* so quickly concluded, Orestes approaches the University of Dar es Salaam, which serves as the Delphic Temple of Apollo.<sup>22</sup> This turn to *Eumenides* also brings back the themes of the film’s opening moments. Pasolini describes the university as indicative of the contradictions of modern African nations. A plaque outside the bookstore reads: “This building was built with a grant from the people and the government of the People’s Republic of China,” but the books on display show “the neocapitalist Anglo-Saxon alternative”<sup>23</sup> (including a close-up of Julius Nyerere’s Swahili translation of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*). This alternative is universalized as part of the African experience through Pasolini’s decision to represent the Athens of *Eumenides* with a *mélange* of shots from Kampala, Kigoma, and Dar es Salaam. He sets up the trial scene at the courthouse of Dar es Salaam, with Soviet workers’ songs now playing behind his narration, as a specific moment with “the first lessons of history ... imaginatively depicted by the first lessons

20 Pasolini 2001, 1185: “un’improvvisa idea.”

21 Pasolini 2001, 1188: “come se fosse la scena reale del mio film.”

22 I briefly address Pasolini’s elision of the maternal role in the concluding section of this chapter.

23 Pasolini 2001, 1190: “l’alternativa ... neocapitalista e anglo-sassone.”

of independent Africa.”<sup>24</sup> Again, his perception of synchronic sympathies between archaic Greece and decolonized Africa allows him to imagine a tectonic cultural shift undertaken by all African nations that can lead to a great new era of African history.

Literalizing this general historical principle, the film cuts back to the students in Rome, as Pasolini asks them if they each perceive themselves to be an Orestes figure. Again, some accept the parallel, while others resist the premise of the question. Undeterred, Pasolini asserts the grandest expression of the hopes he takes from *Eumenides*. It is not simply that Africa repeats the transition of ancient Athens, but that these modern manifestations of Orestes can live up to the greatness of their ancient counterpart by eschewing the pitfalls of capitalism and ushering in a new and better era for all of Africa. Perhaps, he suggests, “the way to keep from being alienated in the consumer civilization of the modern West might also be given him [Orestes] by the very fact that he *is* African. He could thus oppose to the Western way of knowledge an original spirit of his own which would keep the things he learns from being mere notions for consumption and make them real personal ideas.”<sup>25</sup> With this hope in mind, Pasolini takes us back to Africa one last time, where he claims that the transformation of the Furies into the Eumenides can be found in the persistence of “ancient,” “magical” practices into this new era of rationality.<sup>26</sup> A Wagogo dance that he claims had been celebrated with seriousness and “precise meaning” in the past is now enacted with gay exuberance;<sup>27</sup> and a wedding celebration in Dodoma features traditional roles, garb, and songs while also including contemporary, virtually European elements as well.<sup>28</sup> As the Furies

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24 Pasolini 2001, 1191: “Le prime elezioni della storia ... rappresentate fantasticamente dalle prime elezioni dell’Africa indipendente.”

25 Pasolini 2001, 1193: “... il modo di non lasciarsi alienare nella civiltà dei consumi della civiltà occidentale moderna potrebbe essergli anche fornito dal fatto di essere, appunto, africano, cioè di opporre al modo di conoscenza occidentale un suo animo originale che fa sì che le cose che egli apprende non diventino nozioni consumistiche, ma siano nozioni personali, reali.” Pasolini’s vision here contains a paradox in that he essentially hopes that Africa’s primitive spirit will help it avoid the shortcomings of Western capitalism, yet he also sees the process of decolonization as a move toward rationality that undermines any such primitive spirit (a point also made by Greene 2012, 220). His understanding of the power of the transformation of the Furies into the Eumenides, therefore, rests on a razor’s edge.

26 Pasolini 2001, 1195: “magico” ... “antico.”

27 Pasolini 2001, 1194: “significati precisi.”

28 It is “a party similar to those in Europe.” Pasolini 2001, 1196: “... una festa simile a quelle europee.”

transformed find a home in the new Athens where judicial deliberation has replaced cycles of revenge, so too does the ancient magic of Africa endure in the form of tradition in the independent, decolonized African nations.

"But how to conclude? Well, the ultimate conclusion doesn't exist, it's suspended."<sup>29</sup> Pasolini knows that his film will be dated, that the future emerges seamlessly from an inchoate present, yet his optimism in this project is virtually boundless. His understanding of the *Oresteia* as reflective of an anthropological progression in human culture that can be exported to the juncture of African independence suggests a bright future for the emerging African nations. His Marxist frustrations with the consumerism of the capitalist West lead him to hope that with the corrective influence of Africa's recent, "primitive," anti-capitalist past, the "formal democracy" afforded by independence can propel Africa to new heights of cultural achievement that will eclipse European models.

### Sissako's Capitalist Neocolonialism

Abderrehamane Sissako was born in 1961 in Mauritania, though he spent much of his early life in Mali before training as a director in Moscow. His *Bamako* (2006) is set in Mali's capital and, more specifically, in the courtyard of the very home where he lived for many years in downtown Bamako. Like Pasolini's *Appunti*, this film defies easy categorization, though, whereas Pasolini directly controls his film through his omnipresent narratorial voice, Sissako presents a more collaborative project, in which he gave his actors (a mixed cast of activists, amateurs, and professional actors) only general guidance and encouraged them to research and develop their speaking parts as they saw fit. Overall, the film can perhaps best be described as the simultaneous overlay of two stories. One is an understated family melodrama, which follows the disintegration of the relationship between Chaka (Tiécoura Traoré, who has a PhD in transportation engineering and formerly served as the secretary of the Mali railway workers union) and Melé (Aïssa Maïga, a professional actor), who live together with their daughter, Ina, in the film's central home. The other is a surreal trial, enacted in the courtyard, in which Africa, as a unified continent, sues the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization for their fiscal policies involving Africa. Melé, who works as a nightclub singer, never shows any sign of noticing the bustling trial taking place in front of her home, though Chaka pays careful attention to these legal

29 Pasolini 2001, 1196: "Ma come concludere? Ebbene, la conclusion ultima non c'è, è sospesa."

proceedings throughout. This leads me to suspect that the trial is the mental projection of Chaka's personal anguish over the dissolution of his family. And, although Sissako gives no overt indication of a direct debt to either Pasolini's *Appunti* or Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, I take Sissako's trial as a critical re-evaluation of Pasolini's optimistic reading of *Eumenides*.<sup>30</sup>

The film opens with Chaka walking through the outskirts of the city at twilight in a long bluish-grey robe. As we follow him, he pauses to look at a dead or languishing dog lying on the floor of a phone booth. Immediately, we cut away to an image of Melé donning a brightly colored dress as the courtyard fills with black-robed lawyers, a crowd of witnesses, a guard at the courtyard gate, a police officer who oversees the trial itself, an impressively attired judge in a bright red, fur-lined robe, and countless stacks of files crammed with documents relating to the trial. The initial image of Chaka seems random and disconnected from what is going on at the house, but it ties together with the pivotal moment, a few minutes before the end of the film and just after the trial has concluded, when Chaka, dressed in the same long robe and at the same intermediate time of day, kills himself. A dog, apparently the same one that had been in the phone booth, sniffs his body and wanders away. The courtroom drama that interrupts Chaka's walk toward death seems, in retrospect, to expand upon or to represent in a different generic mode his personal deliberation and ultimate decision to turn to suicide.

We can make sense of Sissako's film as it relates to the Aeschylean trial of *Eumenides* by starting from this personal narrative and working outward. Chaka is an Orestes figure—not a matricide, to be sure, nor even a criminal, but someone whose life has come to a critical juncture as his romantic relationship and financial prospects fall apart. The trial that takes up the bulk of the film represents his personal crisis but also offers us a way to see both stories at once. *Bamako* is equally about one person's heart-wrenching decision to kill himself and the post-colonial situation of African nations that are hobbled by cycles of debt and structural readjustments that are, in turn, controlled by

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30 In articles about Sissako and various published interviews, I have found no indication that he had any particular regard for Pasolini. Given their shared interest in Africa and their generally Marxist politics, however, it would be shocking if Sissako did not know Pasolini's *Appunti*. Furthermore, I know of no comments about Aeschylus from Sissako. In *Bamako* the white, male, prosecuting lawyer describes one witness as an "Antigone" and he later calls Western fiscal policies toward Africa a "Trojan Horse." Another classical connection can be found in the staging of *Antigone* at the opening of the Mandenka Theater in Bamako in 1999, where Djénéba Koné, who plays Chaka's sister in *Bamako*, played the lead Sophoclean role. My arguments, however, do not depend on any direct or intentional connection.

Western fiscal institutions. A litany of witnesses present a damning critique of the economic plight of Mali, which parallels that of so many African countries.<sup>31</sup> We hear from lawyers, an impassioned activist, an unemployed school teacher who cannot bring himself to utter a single word, a young man who recounts his desperate efforts to escape the economic situation in Mali by crossing the Sahara only to be turned back at the Moroccan border, and, most powerfully, a griot named Zegu  Bamba who chants his grievances in a dialect from southern Mali that is left untranslated in the film.<sup>32</sup>

Yet, the critical Aeschylean connection has little to do with the internal workings of the court. Rather, it emerges from its own surreal theatricality. Aeschylus had Orestes flee the stage at the end of *Libation Bearers*, hounded by the Furies, and the Areopagite court that Athena establishes to try his case in *Eumenides* was (mythically speaking) an *ad hoc* legal body. The goddess affirms the role of the court and ratifies its authority for the future, which amounts to a historical engagement with Ephialtes' reforms that had recently reduced the jurisdiction of the Areopagus to covering only homicide cases.<sup>33</sup> As with the trial in *Bamako*, Aeschylus uses the case of an individual to comment upon the broader judicial situation.<sup>34</sup> Although Aeschylus' trial surely had almost none of the trappings of a real Athenian court (with a small number of silent jurors brought on stage to cast their votes under the guidance of a theatrical version of the patron divinity of the city), it can be read (and clearly was thus read by

31 Christopher Udry, an economics professor at Yale, has suggested that although the central economic assertions of *Bamako* are generally correct, the film goes too far in portraying the IMF and WB as coldly disinterested in the conditions on the ground in Africa. <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/11/movies/11denn.html>.

32 Bamba's amazing song exemplifies the freedom that Sissako gave his cast in this film. Supposedly, no one on the set knew in advance what Bamba had planned and virtually no one understood the dialect in which he was singing. The decision to leave his words untranslated in the film reflects the experience of those on the set who were moved by his performance despite not being able to understand the literal meaning of his words. Although the griot's words are left untranslated, the lawyer who makes the closing arguments on behalf of Africa renders the gist of his song into French: "When I sow, why don't I reap? When I reap, why don't I eat?"

33 The Areopagus was a tribunal made up of former archons (annually elected officials). For much of the first half of the fifth-century BCE, it was extremely powerful and was closely associated with the influence of Cimon. In the 460s Ephialtes proposed reforms of this court that stripped it of much of its power. Ephialtes was killed in 461, just a few years before Aeschylus staged his *Oresteia* in 458.

34 Kennedy 2006 reads Aeschylus' trial scene as a mapping of imperial power though the use of courts, a thesis that effectively excavates the tensions between Athenian *d mokratia* and its imperialist aspirations.

Pasolini) as an etiological myth for all Western democracy and jurisprudence. *Bamako* by contrast, presents something of the opposite, inasmuch as its trial includes all the sartorial and procedural pomp of a European court even as the panel of judges is denied any direct efficacy. Located in the courtyard of a private home in Mali, the court looks ridiculously out of place, particularly when a toddler with squeaking shoes wobbles among the lawyers and witnesses or when a wedding party turns its celebratory parade through the trial. But most important of all is the fact that this court never renders a verdict. The last two speakers—both advocating for Africa, first a white man, then a black woman—refer to and seek to shape an impending pronouncement from the tribunal, and the penultimate speaker even does so in glowing terms of a coming utopia: “The utopia is, in a way, the African ram that comes to rub against and rip the pants of reasons of state and the market! Utopia, tomorrow, to avoid what is under way in the suburbs of Accra, Abidjan and Cairo where children drunk on deprivation could turn into balls of fire tomorrow.” Realistically, however, this Francophone tribunal holding court outside a home in Bamako could never bring a binding judgment upon the IMF or the World Bank, and the lawyer’s emphasis on utopia (he says the word several times in his closing arguments) may anticipate this impossibility. Any theatrical flourish on Sissako’s part of fabricating an image of progressive judicial closure would propel the film into the world of escapist fantasy (much as the trial in *Eumenides* would have resolved nothing without the intervention of Athena, who convinces the Furies to drop their “case” and accept a new role in the Athenian pantheon). Surely, part of his point is that this case never could have been held in any venue that would have permitted a binding verdict and that Africa’s only chance to say “j’accuse” (without expecting a response in kind) would be in this theatrical fiction of a real court.<sup>35</sup> To conclude his film, Sissako underlines the impossibility of Africa ever receiving justice from these transnational fiscal institutions, and he eschews the ridiculous inefficacy of a mock-court in this Malian home rendering a symbolic verdict. As the final speaker falls silent, therefore, the trial simply ends without any statement whatsoever from the judge.<sup>36</sup>

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35 Aeschylus’ theatrical court may have looked less “real” than Sissako’s, but Athenian dramas were staged in close proximity to the major spaces of political and judicial deliberation. In classical Athens, the deliberative experiences of competitive theater, court cases, and political debate all overlapped.

36 Euripides similarly explored the short-comings of the trial in *Eumenides* in his *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, in which Orestes must fulfill one more task in order to appease the Furies. As Kennedy 2009, 80, puts it: “... the play is premised on the faultiness of Athena’s

Instead, we return to the family melodrama. Melé sings over an image of Chaka putting Ina to bed for the last time. He blows up a balloon for her; we see Melé on stage singing through tears; Chaka positions a fan by Ina's bed, over which a wedding picture of Chaka and Melé hangs; he turns out the light as Melé's voice fades into silence; a long and still shot focuses on Ina, now asleep and alone; and, an instant before the camera leaves that tranquil image, we hear the shot ring out from Chaka's gun. The camera arrives a split second too late, and Chaka's body is already falling to the ground, while a car screeches to a halt—the driver obviously fearing that the noise he had heard was a blown tire. The dog from the opening scene sniffs Chaka's body and walks away. The film ends with Chaka's funeral, held in the same courtyard where the trial had been staged. As his corpse is carried out of that space on a bier followed by a procession of those who had attended the ceremony, the gate to the courtyard, monitored throughout the trial by a firm but bribe-able guard, is now left open. The screen goes black, and a line of Aimé Césaire concludes the experience: "L'oreille collée au sol, j'entendis passer demain" ("My ear to the ground, I heard tomorrow pass by;" the closing lines of Césaire's poem "Les pur-sang")—a nihilistic twist on the lawyers' final, impassioned descriptions of what tomorrow *could be*.

### Orestes on Trial in Africa

Pasolini's idea to restage the trial of Orestes at the courthouse in Dar es Salaam encapsulates his perhaps naïve optimism for an African future. That optimism was an outgrowth of both his frustration with European, and especially American, consumerism and the lack of historical distance that prevented him from perceiving the lasting trauma of the colonial era and the process of decolonization. His interpretation of the *Oresteia* stresses the important continuity of the divinities who are transformed from Furies into Eumenides, and he reads this into his formulation of an African future in which tradition (now devoid of its ritualized magic) coexists with reason and formal democracy.<sup>37</sup>

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justice, but also calls into question vengeance as justice. In effect, the plot of the play is a direct question of what justice is in the terms delineated in *Eumenides* ..."

- 37 In the appendix that provides general comments on his *Appunti*, Pasolini states that "The entire *Oresteia* is a long preparation for the final catharsis ... The catharsis consists of the creation of the Areopagus, dedicated to the Goddess of Reason: That is, in other words, the transformation of a savage city into a civilized one, in which the dark tyranny dominated by the ancient Gods, is replaced by democratic institutions, guided by new Gods."

What is missing in this, however, is an awareness of the continuing influence of the colonial experience, which Pasolini seems simply to think away by positing a precise point of contact between the primitive and the modern. Or, perhaps, the failure was in not appreciating the close historical connection between the end of the colonial era and the rise of globalization, a juxtaposition that immediately necessitated new kinds of intimate relationships among the former colonies and former colonizers now framed around Cold War politics and economics.

We can also attempt to isolate shortcomings (by today's standards) in Pasolini's interpretation of Aeschylus, which relied heavily on the theories of the Cambridge Ritualists (especially, in this case, Cornford) and Thomson's anti-totalitarian *Aeschylus and Athens* that was first published in 1941 and re-issued in Italian in 1949.<sup>38</sup> In the notes to his own translation of the *Oresteia* (published in 1960), Pasolini asserts: "The significance of the tragedy of Orestes is solely, exclusively political."<sup>39</sup> But this political interpretation is not the limited historical contextualization that some today might see in the trilogy's opaque commentary on Ephialtes' reforms but, rather, the articulation of a timeless truth, effected in the transformation of the Furies, about human progress and the passage from forms of primitivism connected with the feminine ("working under the hysterical sign of the mother") into the modern age of masculine reason.<sup>40</sup>

This interpretation not only sets up the feminine as a primal force to be gotten past, it also ignores the ethical claims of female characters—Iphigeneia, sacrificed by her father in the name of war; the Furies, who demand Orestes' matricidal blood; and, above all, Clytemnestra, murdered by her son for her own killing of Agamemnon.<sup>41</sup> The positive transformation that is effected around the figure of Orestes, whose killing of his mother is never in doubt, is predicated on the suspension of cycles of retributive violence through a new

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("Tutta l'*Orestide* è una lunga preparazione alla 'catarsi' finale ... La 'catarsi' consiste nell'istituzione dell'Areopago, dovuto alla Dea della Ragione: ossia, in parole povere, la trasformazione di una città 'selvaggia' in una città 'civile', in cui la cupa tirannia dominata da Dèi arcaici, viene sostituita dalle istituzioni democratiche, guidate da Dèi nuovi," 1199).

38 For an excellent evaluation of Pasolini's study of Aeschylus, see Fusillo 2005 and Usher 2014.

39 Pasolini 1960, 176: "Il significato delle tragedie di Oreste è solo, esclusivamente, politico."

40 Pasolini 1960, 177: "... operanti sotto il segno uterino della madre." The Italian *uterino*, like the English word hysterical, implies both a bodily structure and a psycho-emotional state.

41 Spivak 2009, 622 suggests that *Bamako* too may have a gender problem. She notes that there are no white women in the film, "no global feminist solidarity."



form of justice that can only be instituted by Athena (a move that is paralleled, incidentally, in her role at the end of the *Odyssey* in suppressing vendettas on Ithaca). As Simon Critchley puts it, in the *Oresteia*:

... the condition of possibility for Athena's institution of justice in Athenian democracy is the violent act that decides against the Furies and in favour of Orestes for the simple reason that Athena honours the male principle in all things, having sprung directly from the head of Zeus without the mediation of the womb. The lesson of the *Oresteia* and Greek tragedy more generally is that the traumatic cycle of revenge and family violence in the house of Atreus and elsewhere can only be suspended by Athena's violent institution of justice. Tragedy is mythic violence that attempts to break the repetitive cycle of family slaughter.<sup>42</sup>

Taking a cue from Walter Benjamin's *Critique of Violence*, Critchley claims that the mythical violence in the house of Atreus and the ancient rights of the Furies can only be stamped out by the divine violence of Athena. Yet this process is not perfectly tidy, and the valid claims of Clytemnestra must be left aside for democratic judicial law to take firm root. Much like the violence perpetrated against Thersites in the *Iliad*, which is acceptable because of his hideous appearance and obstreperous ways, and the conclusion of the *Odyssey*, in which a violent imposition of forgetfulness (planned by Zeus and carried out by Athena) forestalls further bloodshed, the *Oresteia* shows that something must be given up to provide a new model of social stability.

Although we must be careful to deal with Aeschylus' story as a mythical narrative, we can recognize that what is left aside in the *Oresteia* ultimately is the position of Clytemnestra. In terms of Agamben's formulation of biopolitical theory, we can go so far as to say that she, although now a shade, has been reduced to a condition of "bare life" (*zoê*, as opposed to the more fulsome *bios*), that state of exception in which individual rights are attenuated in precise contradistinction to those of the rest of society.<sup>43</sup> By not focusing on this minor theme that lurks in the background of the triumphalist acquittal of

42 Critchley 2011, 66–7.

43 Agamben's biopolitical theory (built largely upon Foucault's discussions of biopower) claims that sovereign power establishes, maintains and justifies itself through the creation of states of exception in which certain individuals are deprived of their rights. He grounds his ideas in the Roman figure of the *homo sacer*, who is defined by the law as someone existing outside the law. His theories are most fully set out in Agamben 1998 and 2005. Agamben was a friend of Pasolini and even played Phillip in *The Gospel According to*

Orestes, Pasolini's reading of the *Oresteia* and his extension of that reading to the situation of an Africa newly freed from European colonial control permits an unbounded optimism that anticipates a socialist utopia that avoids both the terrors of primitivism and the pitfalls of American neocapitalism.

Sissako rejects this optimism for the very blunt reason that he sees the colonial era of direct European territorial control of Africa replayed today in a deterritorialized fiscal neocolonialism that has prevented African nations from having any real opportunity to gain the stability and prosperity promised by decolonization; his trial essentially overturns or rejects the implications of Aeschylean judicial success. Aeschylus' similarly surreal trial, which claims the authority of any fully empowered trial, uses the law as a basis for organizing and affirming the structures of society by isolating and quarantining (and, in some cases, nominally rehabilitating) individuals whom the majority deem to be deserving of nothing more than "bare life."

In *Bamako* we see a theatrical simulacrum of such a process. All the structures are in place—a panel of judges, lawyers, witnesses, security agents, and even the formally delimited and regulated judicial space. Those inside the court go through the motions of moving the judicial narrative toward the expected conclusion, while those outside the court, on the streets of Bamako, play the part of the excluded, whose exclusion gives meaning to the privileged space of the trial. Yet the formalized space of this trial is merely the courtyard of a private home; the defendants are absent corporate entities that exist beyond the physical and legal reach of these proceedings; and no real verdict is possible. Instead, the point of the trial is to show that it is all of Africa that has been forced into the condition of "bare life" by the fiscal policies of the World Bank and its ilk.<sup>44</sup> This recognition explains several key elements in the film. Africa is treated as a unified whole, because the entire continent serves as a space of exception against which the "global north" can define and assert its own privilege. This situation is not based on any 'guilt' or objective reality

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*St. Matthew.* For a scathing critique of Agamben's use of Aristotle as the foundation of his political theorizing, see Finlayson 2010.

44 Sissako does not completely exonerate Africa from sharing some of the blame for this situation, a point made through a strange film-inside-a-film within *Bamako* and called "Shootout in Timbuktu," a cowboy shoot-em-up Western starring Danny Glover and a cast of black cowboys. Sissako has said that this mis-en-scene is intended to show that Africans too contribute to the continent's problems. This theme has now been expanded in Sissako's *Timbuktu* (2014), which was nominated for the Palm d'Or at Cannes and an Oscar for "best foreign film" and which depicts the infiltration of native African Islamic extremism in Timbuktu. Interestingly, as with the dog in *Bamako*, *Timbuktu* begins and ends with a highly symbolic role for an animal (in this case, an antelope).

about conditions in Africa but, rather, has been developed by an historical process that *Bamako* lays bare. This point is made powerfully by the first witness (played by Aminata Traoré, a Malian activist, author, and politician), who asserts that Africa not be seen as a victim of its poverty but, rather, of its riches. The fiction of African poverty is the biopolitical script promoted by the West to justify the reduction of Africa to the condition of “bare life.” The wall that separates the privileged space of the trial from those who are excluded turns out to symbolize the collective exclusion of all Africa, which is why that barrier can be left open at the end of the film. The fiction of any spatial differentiation has been concluded and unmasked, and the gate loses its symbolic value.

Finally, we can see how the trial and Chaka's story reiterate one another. The trial provides Sissako with the forum in which to discuss the relationship between Africa and the West. But, as I claimed above, the trial also represents the thought process of Chaka as he walks toward his self-inflicted death. The condition of Africa—the poverty, the unemployment, the corruption—leaves Chaka no hope of improving his situation for himself or his daughter, but his desolation also personalizes the African condition. As Harrow puts it, Chaka “doesn't die under the sign of tragedy, but of a biopolitical order.”<sup>45</sup> Importantly, his death goes unnoticed by the driver (surely symbolizing Western affluence), who fears only that his car has been damaged. The only creature to acknowledge Chaka's suicide is the dog who, in the opening scene, had lain, apparently lifeless, on the floor of a phone booth. Chaka has symbolically exchanged places with the dog (the one who was upright and mobile has now become supine and motionless), and such animalization is the ultimate statement of the dehumanizing condition of “bare life,” the biopolitical mechanism by which the attenuation of existence for some permits the thriving of those who live outside the space of exception.<sup>46</sup>

As receptions of Aeschylus, Pasolini's *Appunti* and Sissako's *Bamako* stake antithetical claims. Pasolini universalizes the message of the *Oresteia* in a

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45 Harrow 2013, 199.

46 Agamben 2004 deals with the connection between humans and animals. In this work he describes an “anthropological machine,” which is a political exercise carried out by the sovereign to distinguish certain human figures (slaves, barbarians, Jews under the Nazi regime) as sub-human and bestial. We can contrast the symbolism of Sissako's dog with the analysis of animals in the *Oresteia* by Heath 2005, 216: “By the end of the three plays, the bestial, human, and divine elements have been separated and channeled into their proper places in the *polis*, an institution that not only represents this proper arrangement, but also makes such an essential differentiation possible.” For Heath, the *Oresteia* moves from category chaos among animals, humans and divinities toward the ordered world of the *polis*, a productive ordering that Sissako's film suggests is absent from Africa.

way that allows him to fold decolonized Africa into its narrative of progress. Sissako, by contrast, and perhaps without any direct and intentional engagement with either Pasolini or Aeschylus, rejects the idea that Western-style judicial judgments can ameliorate the situation in Africa. Orestes, guilty of killing his mother but declared innocent by a regime that sets aside Clytemnestra's demands for justice in the name of progress, contrasts sharply with Chaka, who is completely innocent and yet is forced into the role of Agamben's *homo sacer*. Chaka stands for both the personal cost of our global financial system and the shared experience of the African continent. If Aeschylus' *Eumenides* can be read etiologically as the establishment of a new era of Western justice and democracy, Pasolini's *Appunti* aims to extend that narrative to include Africa as well. Sissako's *Bamako*, however, bemoans the limits of current trends in economic globalization and shows that the victorious acquittal of Orestes does not extend to the economic plight of Africa, which continues to endure a debilitating exclusion enforced by the corporate gods who control the global economic system.<sup>47</sup>

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# Reception of the Plays of Aeschylus in South Africa

*Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr.*

## Introduction

The short answer to the question of what is the reception of Aeschylus in Africa is that Aeschylus is received in Africa through a glass darkly, if at all—always mediated, always adapted in one manner or another, although if we are honest, that is true of Aeschylus anywhere in the contemporary world. Aeschylus is encountered in university education, especially for those pursuing study in theatre and/or drama, which is also where most productions of Aeschylus are also received, and again, almost always in adaptation. For the purposes of this essay, after a brief overview of Aeschylus in Africa I will focus on the use and reception of Aeschylus in South Africa.

As Eleftheria Ioannidu observes of Wole Soyinka and Euripides' *Bacchae*, the “original” of a Greek tragedy is rarely the Greek tragedy in original Greek in and of itself, with the exception of university departments of classics (of which there are few in Africa). Instead, the “original” is constituted of a group of translations into English or French, often initially imported from the colonizing power.<sup>1</sup> In the case of Soyinka, his Euripides is actually an amalgam of Euripides as filtered through English versions of Murray, Cavendish, and Arrowsmith. In much the same way, Aeschylus in Africa is a filtered, mediated, translated, amalgamated hybrid encountered through colonial versions and thus often further adapted by the indigenous artist.

Furthermore, Aeschylus is the least produced, least adapted, and least received of the Greek tragedians in Africa. *Antigone* and *Oedipus Tyrannus* assert the primacy of Sophocles in Africa, adapted in many cultures and translated into many languages. *Medea* guarantees Euripides an African presence, and versions have been performed in South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, the Congo, and several nations. Only the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus appears upon occasion (with one or two exceptions), and then mostly (if not entirely) in South Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> Ioannidu 2010, 214.

### Aeschylus in the University

There were some performances of Aeschylus' plays during the colonial period, almost always associated with universities. In 1936, for example, the *Agamemnon* was performed by students at Adisadel College in Ghana.<sup>2</sup> The racism inherent in the colonial education system as often as not kept Aeschylus away from indigenous education, perceiving the "natives" as needing Western culture, but not yet able to fully appreciate it. In his critical study of "native education," A. Victor Murray wrote, "There is no 'African culture'—as yet. There is this universal heritage waiting to be taken up by them, what will they do with it?"<sup>3</sup> By "universal heritage," he means Plato, Virgil, the Bible, and all English classics: "the glorious heritage of all men ... is to be found in literature" and promptly recommends Shakespeare.<sup>4</sup> The Greek tragedians are not included.

Beginning in the 1940s, translations of Greek tragedy into English or French would be brought into the Anglophone and Francophone colonies, respectively, for reading in universities during the colonial period. Translations into indigenous or other African languages were comparatively rare. In one notable exception, Professor T. J. Haarhoff, professor of classics at the University of the Witwatersrand, translated the *Agamemnon* into Afrikaans in 1946, both to be read but also as a text for radio drama.<sup>5</sup> Shakespeare, however, maintained dominance in English colonies and Moliere, Racine, and Corneille took prominence in French ones.

In 1963 the South African government subsidized the state Performing Arts Councils (PAC). The commercial theatres did not perform Greek tragedy at all, although the PAC theatres did in both English and Afrikaans.<sup>6</sup> Smaller community groups would also perform Greek tragedies, with some artists such as Athol Fugard emerging out of that context to create professional adaptations of Greek tragedy to comment on the South African situation. Shakespeare, however, was the dominant playwright, seen as a symbol, a "signifier for white apartheid 'civilisation,'" and the Greeks were a distant second for the same.<sup>7</sup>

In the current, post-apartheid university setting, the plays of Aeschylus are read in theatre history and dramatic literature courses in translation into

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<sup>2</sup> McClean 1980, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Murray 1929, 323.

<sup>4</sup> Murray 1929, 326.

<sup>5</sup> van Zyl Smit 2003, 8.

<sup>6</sup> Orkin 1991, 245.

<sup>7</sup> Orkin 1991, 235.

English, French, or Afrikaans. In his more recent survey of "Research in Greek and Latin Studies in South Africa, 1985–1994." W. J. Henderson (1996) does not report a single instance of research being carried out on Greek tragedy, any of the tragedians, or classical drama in any form. Theatre and Drama programmes, however, presented several adaptations of Aeschylus and the other tragedians.

An informal survey of members of the African Theatre Association indicates that Aeschylus is rarely, if ever, performed at university in translation alone. His work, however, is read in translation as part of the upper level undergraduate and graduate curriculums at such universities as Ghana's University of Ghana at Legon, Nigeria's University of Ile-Ife, University of Ibadan and the University of Lagos, as well as South Africa's University of Stellenbosch, University of Witwatersrand, University of Rhodes, University of the Free State, the University of Pretoria, the University of Natal (now University of Kwazulu-Natal), and the University of Cape Town, the last two of which regularly performed Greek tragedy in English through the apartheid era.<sup>8</sup> Patrick Ebewo reports that of twenty-three South African universities, ten offer drama/theatre as an academic discipline. He further offers the example of the students of the University of the Free State's theatre program, who read Greek tragedy. Other universities "occasionally produce" Greek tragedy, but much more popular is the devising of new South African work based upon those Greek texts.<sup>9</sup>

It is, perhaps, South Africa's unique heritage as a settler nation and its university curriculum derived from British universities that Greek tragedy in general and Aeschylus in particular tend to be more present in the theatrical culture as well as the academic culture there, but not without a certain amount of cultural anxiety, particularly in the present moment. Betine van Zyl Smit states:

Greek tragedy is part of the legacy of the Dutch and British colonial powers in South Africa. It was thus not surprising that some people feared it would prove unwelcome in post-1994 democratic South Africa with its emphasis on African Renaissance. Indeed, there was a pessimism that such performances would be probably be seen as "Eurocentric."<sup>10</sup>

Van Zyl Smit then indicates that these expectations were incorrect, as between 1990 and 2003 there were five *Medeas*, two *Bacchaes*, three *Antigones*,

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8 van Zyl Smit 2003, 5.

9 Ebewo 2011, 123–4.

10 van Zyl Smit 2003, 3.



and at least five adaptations of the Trojan War's aftermath. Thus, there is a conflicted legacy towards Greek tragedy in South Africa as both emblematic of Eurocentrism while also offering a cultural material that could be adapted to illuminate South African contexts in new ways.

### The *Oresteia* in South Africa

Aeschylus' narratives, characters, and translated words are, without exception, always blended, supplemented and/or fused with elements from the other Athenian tragedians. Aeschylus is never presented solely on his own, but always with Sophocles and Euripides. The history of Argos in the wake of the Trojan War dominates Aeschylus in Africa. As noted above, the *Oresteia* is rarely adapted solely in and of itself from Aeschylus. The aspect(s) of the story of the house of Agamemnon that the individual artists choose to focus on determines which Greek tragedian dominates the adaptation. While apartheid era adaptations tend to focus on the violence of the plays, post-apartheid adaptations tend to focus on the trial, thus bringing *Eumenides* to the forefront, while simultaneously elevating the more psychological portraits of Orestes, Electra, and Clytemnestra to be found in Euripides and Sophocles. How the adaptations are received are determined by a number of factors. As Simon Goldhill cannily observes, "a performance as an event embodies (at least) three different levels of reception": the artwork itself, audience response, and critical response.<sup>11</sup> For the rest of this essay I propose to examine a half dozen significant South African adaptations of the royal house of Argos that employ elements of Aeschylus.

In *Theatre and Society in South Africa: Some Reflections in a Fractured Mirror*, Temple Hauptfleisch categorized multi-lingual, multi-ethnic casts performing a fusion of texts in a form of physical theatre, adding elements of indigenous South African cultures as "indigenous hybrid" and argues it is "uniquely South African."<sup>12</sup> All of the playwrights discussed in this essay follow Farber in, as noted below, viewing "classic texts as metaphoric vehicles for expressing complex contemporary reality." Aeschylus is never Aeschylus for his own sake, or for the sake of presenting Greek tragedy. Indigenous hybrid uses Aeschylus to make points about South Africa; although, as noted above, in doing so it also makes points about Aeschylus. It is through this indigenous hybrid model that Aeschylus is realized and received in South Africa.

<sup>11</sup> Goldhill 2010, 66.

<sup>12</sup> Hauptfleisch 1997, 60.

The past half century has seen many significant adaptations of the *Oresteia* and its related texts; Athol Fugard's *Orestes*, Merwe Schlotz's 1981 Afrikaans version, and *The Song of Jacob Zulu*, an adaptation of the *Oresteia* by South African-born Tug Yourgrau, were all created during apartheid-era South Africa, using the text to critique apartheid. Post-1993, the *Oresteia* served as a metaphor for the failures of justice, often framing the Truth and Reconciliation Committee and its processes as problematic, in such adaptations as *In the City of Paradise*, created by Mark Fleischman and the students of the University of Cape Town, Mervyn McMurtry's *Electra*, performed at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (still University of Natal at the time), Marthius Basson's *Aars!*, an Afrikaans adaptation of a Flemish adaptation, and Yael Farber's *Molara*.

*Orestes* was an experiment in theatre by Athol Fugard, better known in classics for his *The Island*, an adaptation of *Antigone* created with John Kani and Winston Ntshona. *Orestes* was based on the true story of John Harris, a member of the white anarchist Armed Resistance Movement who left a suitcase bomb in Johannesburg Station on 24 July 1964, killing a child and badly burning an old woman. Harris was tried, found guilty and hanged on 1 April 1965. The case stunned the nation as Harris was the only white ever to be executed for resistance to apartheid through terrorism and his acts represented a direct refutation of the government's assertion that apartheid worked.

Fugard became interested in Harris' story and began working on a performance piece based on it in August, 1970, writing in his notebooks (1983): "The Oresteian Trilogy as one of the projects for next year. Two questions: Clytemnestra? What is justice?"<sup>13</sup> As his initial entry notes, he wanted to frame the story of Harris on Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. Yet as the piece developed, Fugard turned more and more to the other tragedies. Fugard was not interested in the Furies or heroics, but instead, as Dennis Walder notes, "the effect of violence upon those who carry it out," which made Fugard rely much more upon Euripides than Aeschylus, although in the end he blended elements of all three tragedians' versions.<sup>14</sup> Fugard claimed that he went to Aeschylus for the character of Clytemnestra, but his Orestes and Electra come from Euripides.<sup>15</sup> The final version of the script, which was performed in late 1970 for only a few weeks for small audiences, was an eighty-minute performance by three actors with a spoken text of only about three hundred lines.

The story of Harris overlapped with the myth of Orestes and a series of Jerzy Grotowski-inspired theatrical elements. The actors played Clytemnestra,

13 Fugard 1983, 187.

14 Walder 1985, 13.

15 Fugard 1983, 188.

Orestes, and Electra. A chair represented Agamemnon. Each night, Clytemnestra would destroy the chair and each night Orestes, with a suitcase, would set off a bomb (represented by the shredding of newspapers) that would kill her. As E. A. MacKay notes, Fugard did not so much interpret the Greek material through the story of Harris, he “superimposed [it], like a double exposure in photography, so that one perceives two images which fused to form a new pattern.”<sup>16</sup> Although Aeschylus inspired Fugard’s *Orestes*, the performance piece was more an adaptation of Euripides than the *Oresteia*; *Orestes* has no Furies, no resolution, no creation of a just legal system—only victims of violence.<sup>17</sup>

In 1981, Merwe Scholtz developed an Afrikaans version of the *Oresteia* based on Walter Jens’ German version. It was considered “an avant-garde version” with corpses on trolleys, plenty of smoke and neon lights. Hardwick reports, “Scholtz valued the *Oresteia* because it examined the relationship between the moral and judicial values and charted the move ... to what he thought was an idealistic view of a harmonious and just society.”<sup>18</sup> Although Betine van Zyl Smit argues Scholtz “did not transform it into” a play that dealt “primarily with contemporary South Africa,”<sup>19</sup> given Scholtz’s view of the *Oresteia* as a model of a just society, it is difficult to imagine that on some level the play was a vehicle by which the violence occurring regularly under apartheid might at least be addressed tangentially and the underlying social causes of the violence brought to the fore. What makes this adaptation unique is that it might be the only use of Greek tragedy in the Afrikaans language to critique apartheid. Most Afrikaans theatre tended to be apolitical, and the few adaptations or translations of Greek tragedy tended to be apolitical as well.<sup>20</sup>

*The Song of Jacob Zulu* was inspired by the real case of Andrew Zondo, the son of a Zulu Christian minister who trained as an African National Conference guerilla in Angola and who planted a bomb in a mall in South Africa in December, 1985. The bomb killed four and injured dozens. Zondo was captured, tried, found guilty, and was executed in September, 1986. Tug Yourgrau, the author of the play, was born in South Africa but moved to Boston in his youth. In 1987, he travelled to South Africa for a ten-day trip after thirty years away and learned about Zondo’s case. Reminded of the *Oresteia*, he set

16 MacKay 1989, 32.

17 See Wetmore 2001, 145–54 for a full analysis of this production.

18 Hardwick 2007, 49.

19 van Zyl Smit 2010, 115.

20 See Fugard’s *Exits and Entrances* (2007) for a dramatized version of backstage life at an Afrikaaner adaptation of *Oedipus Rex*.

out to write “Aeschylus set in Zululand,” eventually involving the isicathamiya group Ladysmith Black Mambazo to serve as chorus.<sup>21</sup> The play premiered at the Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago on April 12, 1993 before touring to New York, Australia, and several other world cities.

Although not “South African” in its production origin, the author, story, and chorus (without whom the show would not have happened) were all South African. The play follows the structure of *The Eumenides*—beginning with the trial of Andrew Zondo, here called Jacob Zulu, and then employing flashbacks (which draw both on the real history of Zondo and the elements of the *Oresteia*) in order to show the need for a judicial system to deal with the violence that begets violence in South African culture at the time. While Zondo might have been executed, the social conditions that drove him to train to fight apartheid go unaddressed by the legal system and thus the system itself is unjust.<sup>22</sup>

In all three of these texts, adapting the *Oresteia* in apartheid-era South Africa offered no closure in the manner of the *Eumenides*. Orestes was driven to violence by violence and any justice (such as the court case in *Jacob Zulu*) was dramatized as inherently unjust, as it derived from a system that was inherently unjust and itself was the reason for the cycle of violence in the first place.

The end of apartheid did not spell the end of Aeschylus in South Africa. Indeed, the *Oresteia* served a continuing purpose and continued to be received as a useful metaphor for the situation in which the nation found itself. The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, No 34 of 1995 established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), whose purpose was to conduct hearings concerning violence and human right abuses during the apartheid era. Three committees, the Amnesty Committee, the Reparation and Rehabilitation (R&R) Committee, and the Human Rights Violations (HRV) Committee, all began meeting in 1996 to order to investigate, hear witnesses, and determine the truth of what happened as well as work towards restorative rather than punitive justice (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2009). The TRC had the power to grant amnesty to those who had committed violent crimes so long as the crimes were politically motivated, proportionate, and there was full disclosure by the person seeking amnesty. In other words, the model the TRC established struck many as being very similar to the model of the *Eumenides*: a group of citizens were selected to determine what happened and how justice might best be served in order to repair the community. Thus

21 Yourgrau 1993, vii–viii.

22 See Wetmore 2001, 153–68 for a full analysis of this text and production.

the end of apartheid brought a number of new adaptations of the *Oresteia*, now focused on the trial in the *Eumenides*.

More than a few scholars frame their analyses of these plays through their relationship with the TRC. Beginning with the TRC in their exploration of South African adaptations of the *Oresteia*, as I have done here. Betine van Zyl Smit even titled her essay on these adaptations "Orestes and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission."<sup>23</sup> If criticism is a form of reception, then TRC looms large in interpretation. And if the artists (and scholars) use Aeschylus to understand the TRC, the audiences (and scholars) are also using the TRC in order to understand Aeschylus.

In 1998, Mark Fleischman and the students of the University of Cape Town developed *In the City of Paradise*, a retelling of the Electra story using elements of Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*. Orestes and Electra murder Clytemnestra and Aegisthus and are then pursued by Furies wearing gas masks, the image itself emblematic of the clashes between South African police and rioters during and after the apartheid era. Fleischman adds the characters of Tyndareus and Leda, Clytemnestra's parents, who stop the Furies and the mob from killing Orestes and Electra, demanding justice from the courts. They are then outraged when, in a TRC-esque turn, Orestes and Electra are given full amnesty for revealing their roles in the murder and why they did it. As van Zyl Smit reports, "Fleischman's Orestes and Electra had a strong political motive: to rid Argos of the oppressive regime of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra who denied their citizens democratic freedom."<sup>24</sup> Thus they satisfy all three requirements for amnesty under the TRC, a concern not present in Aeschylus or the other tragedians. Astrid van Weyenberg reads this as an illustration of how "in the process of the TRC the attention moved away from the personal toward the national," just as it did in the *Eumenides*.<sup>25</sup> She also argues, however, that what is dramatized is, as in Aeschylus, "the start of what will be a long process" and that the privileging of justice as reconciliation requires an imperfect justice: Orestes does literally get away with murder in Aeschylus, but the verdict is for the greater good, despite being personally unsatisfying to some.<sup>26</sup> Steinmeyer argues that Fleischman's workshop theatre is "regenerative in the face of the essential tragedy of the South African situation,"<sup>27</sup> while van Weyenberg sees the play as also being a critique of the TRC, its process, and its results. The

<sup>23</sup> van Zyl Smit 2010, 114.

<sup>24</sup> van Zyl Smit 2010, 121.

<sup>25</sup> van Weyenberg 2008, 38.

<sup>26</sup> van Weyenberg 2008, 40.

<sup>27</sup> Steinmeyer 2007, 104.

*Oresteia*, she observes, “dramatizes closure but simultaneously performs a critique of closure,” which is denied to some who appear before the TRC, such as Fleischman’s Tyndarus and Leda.<sup>28</sup>

Following on Fleischman’s production was Mervyn McMurry’s *Electra* (2000), performed at the University of Natal. McMurry used Sophocles’ *Electra* as its center with elements from Aeschylus’ *Libation Bearers*, and Euripides’ *Electra*, *Orestes*, *Hecuba*, and *Andromache*, demonstrating once again that Greek tragedy in South Africa tends toward the devised adaptation which blends multiple source texts, making the reception of Aeschylus part of a larger tapestry of “Greek tragedy.” The Aeschylean presence in this play is predominantly in its choral odes, using lines from *Agamemnon*—mostly the story of the sacrifice of Iphigenia and the Hymn to Zeus.<sup>29</sup> McMurry, however, parallels Sophocles closely in terms of characters, action, and sentiment. Those looking for Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* would find only a handful of lines.<sup>30</sup>

Yet another adaptation, *Aars!*, was seen as scandalous because of its emphasis on explicit sex, obscene language, and violence. The play, adapted by director Marthius Basson from a Flemish original (original adaptation of the *Oresteia*, that is), focuses solely on the immediate family: Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, Orestes, and Electra, all of whom address each other with Afrikaans terms of familial endearment: “Mamma,” “Pappa,” “Seun,” and “Sussie.” Basson was particularly interested in the cycle of violence in the larger community, for which the family stood as metaphor. As van Zyl Smit states, however, “One would be hard put to connect this play to the *Oresteia* if it had not been for the programme notes.”<sup>31</sup> In other words, Aeschylus provided the characters and the narrative, but much was transformed by Basson to the point of being unrecognizable as an adaptation of a Greek tragedy.

First performed in 2003, *Molora* (which means “Ash” in Sesotho), “stages the collision of national and intimate dramas of violence in post-apartheid South Africa.”<sup>32</sup> Kruger points out that, “[l]ike Fugard, Farber omits the *Eumenides* but her deployment of the language and image-repertoire of the TRC nonetheless turns her play away from the catastrophe of vengeance that haunted the historical moment of Fugard’s experiment toward something that aspires to

28 van Weyenberg 2013, 137. For more on this production, see Steinmeyer 2007, 102–18; van Weyenberg 2008, 31–46; and van Weyenberg 2013.

29 Steinmeyer 2009, 118.

30 For more on this production, see Steinmeyer 2009, 111–24.

31 van Zyl Smit 2003, 10.

32 Kruger 2012, 360.

the performance of reconciliation."<sup>33</sup> In other words, Fugard and Farber both employ elements of Aeschylus, but Farber's post-apartheid context allows her to focus on the pursuit of the just society found at the end of the *Oresteia*, whereas Fugard, still in the midst of the violence, was unable to do so.

As with Fugard, the initial impetus behind the development of the play was Aeschylus. Farber told Lorna Hardwick: "It was on reading the ancient *Oresteia* trilogy that I felt the potency of the classic texts as metaphoric vehicles for expressing complex contemporary reality. Here is an extraordinary epic family saga, passed down to us through the centuries, that unflinchingly articulates the spirals of violence unleashed in the pursuit of righteous bloodshed."<sup>34</sup>

The published text of *Molara* states it is "based on the *Oresteia* by Aeschylus," but subsequent programmes have stated it is drawn from "various versions of the *Oresteia* trilogy, but also including versions by Sophocles and Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Flies* (1946)."<sup>35</sup> As Kruger reports, "Farber worked essentially from different English translations" and incorporated many elements of Xhosa culture, blending them with a variety of Greek sources: "The juxtaposition of lines from several plays and the incorporation of Sophocles' and Euripides' *Electra* demand attention because they change *Molara's* dramaturgy by giving more stage time to the female characters than the *Oresteia* allows."<sup>36</sup> In short, the most recent and most significant post-apartheid adaptation of Aeschylus still filters his play through translation, adaptation, culture, and material by the other tragedians. Van Zyl Smit quotes Farber as calling it, "a patchwork quilt of quotations from the original Greek plays."<sup>37</sup> When we receive this Aeschylus, we are receiving him through many things, and the critics (including this one) add yet another level of reception by subsequently analyzing how much or how little of "Aeschylus" remains and how it is used to mean in this new context, pace Goldhill.

The play is presented as a TRC hearing, with a table and a microphone. Only Clytemnestra, Electra and Orestes remain, as does a chorus of women.<sup>38</sup> As with Fleischman, "characters insist on telling their stories, on conveying *their* subjective truths" (emphasis in original).<sup>39</sup> Many of these adaptations,

33 Kruger 2012, 365.

34 Hardwick 2010, 199.

35 van Zyl Smit 2010, 129.

36 Kruger 2012, 376.

37 van Zyl Smit 2010, 130.

38 The plays discussed in this article use variant spellings of the Greek character names, but that we have chosen to edit them for consistency.

39 van Weyenberg 2013, 100.

including *Molara* and *In the City of Paradise* also focus on the suffering of Clytemnestra in a manner missing from Aeschylus. Both adaptations allow Clytemnestra to reveal her feelings of betrayal and heartbreak at the death of Iphigenia, the absence of Agamemnon for ten years, and his murder of her first husband. The cycle of violence, the audience is told, began long before Clytemnestra killed Agamemnon, but only she has been held accountable for it.

Clytemnestra and Electra argue for eight scenes before the arrival of Orestes (which is more in keeping with Euripides than Aeschylus). The characters testify as to the events of the death of Agamemnon. When Orestes confronts Clytemnestra, she calls for her “man-killing axe” and appeals for mercy (81). He asks Electra to “rewrite this ancient end” (83), which we might read as a metadramatic refutation of Aeschylus’ narrative. Unlike previous versions, in which Orestes must seek amnesty for the murder of Clytemnestra, Farber presents an *Oresteia* adaptation in which Clytemnestra must seek amnesty for the murder of Agamemnon. Hardwick states that Farber uses lines from *Iphigenia at Aulis* as part of Clytemnestra’s testimony: “The result is to cast Clytemnestra as a victim as well as a root cause and perpetuator of violence, and yet still not culpable for her actions.”<sup>40</sup>

Yvette Hutchison states that Farber “uses the various narratives surrounding the *Oresteia* to explore how the dispossessed of South Africa can contemplate reconciliation, forgiveness and healing,” and that Aeschylus’ text is “of particular significance,” perhaps more than Sophocles and Euripides as the shift from blood vendetta to “justice framed by democratic process” in Aeschylus parallels the shift in South Africa “from an apartheid to a post-apartheid context.”<sup>41</sup>

### *Other Adaptations*

It should be noted that there are also the occasional non-*Oresteian* adaptations performed in South Africa. Tamantha Hammerschlag, a professor of drama at the University of Kwazulu-Natal, adapted the *Suppliants* in August 2002 in a production directed by Oida Smit at the Nunnery Theatre at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. The production added the characters of Medea, Io, and Deianeira (all women who were exiled), among others, to a group of African refugee women in Johannesburg, “juxtapose[ing] the Greek mythological world with the grim prose of South African bureaucracy, in the form of official applications for permanent residence and official rejections.”<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Hardwick 2010, 200.

<sup>41</sup> Hutchison 2013, 86.

<sup>42</sup> Lambert 2011.



Further complicating the issue are the multiplicities of knowledge in audiences, artists, and critics. Hardwick argues that *Molora* is actually a number of different plays (or more accurately different experiences).<sup>43</sup> Some spectators know nothing about Greek tragedy or the original texts and view *Molora* solely as an original work. Some spectators know the Greek tragedies but not the South African context (as when the play was performed in London, resulting in the critics asking “Why no *Eumenides*?” but ignoring the shaping influence of the TRC. Rosie Wyles, for example, argues that the use of gumboots in *Molora* frames the entire production—apartheid-era, South African-specific references that were not understood or even seen by the British audiences in the subsequent London production:

Wellingtons, or “gumboots,” had been standard issue for workers in the gold mines in the time of Apartheid (since it proved cheaper than draining the mines of infected water), and gained iconic cultural status in this use with the emergence of the “gumboot dance.”<sup>44</sup>

Thus, having the entire (female) chorus wearing gumboots was a political statement in South Africa that was not perceived or understood in London. And some spectators knew nothing of the Greek originals or the South African context. Thus, the play, as all these plays do, does not mean but generates meaning in context. For Aeschylus, as for all performance, context determines meaning.

### Conclusion

Unique to South Africa is the historic use of the *Oresteia* as a frame through which to view South Africa's society and justice system. During the apartheid era the focus was on blood vengeance and the hope for (unrealized) justice caused by the violence inherent in the oppressive system. During the post-apartheid era, Aeschylus' plays becomes a celebration of justice, flawed though it may be, under the TRC. Steinmeyer reminds us that there is no forgiveness in the *Oresteia*: not Clytemnestra of Agamemnon, not Electra or Orestes of Clytemnestra, nor the Furies of Orestes, but “there cannot be reconciliation without forgiveness.”<sup>45</sup> In the end, Aeschylus must be transcended before the murders can even happen—the Furies do not become the Kindly Ones.

43 Hardwick 2010, 203–4.

44 Wyles 2010, 176–7.

45 Steinmeyer 2007, 116.

The citizens do. It is the indigenous hybrid approach to Aeschylus that allows South African theatre artists to use his plays to simultaneously celebrate and reject the models he provides.

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## In Search of Prometheus: Aeschylean Wanderings in Latin America

*Jacques A. Bromberg*

### Introduction

This chapter offers a broad survey of Latin American receptions in translation, adaptation, and re-performance of the seven extant plays of Aeschylus since the nineteenth century. My approach is chiefly panoptic, rather than interpretive, and my aim is to present a thoroughgoing coverage of Aeschylean receptions that will be in itself something new in English and will perhaps point researchers in some new directions.<sup>1</sup> It will not surprise readers to learn that considerably less attention has been given to modern re-performance in Latin America of the plays of Aeschylus, compared with Euripidean and Sophoclean receptions. Yet, despite their alleged preference for his successors, Spanish-American authors were far from ignorant of Aeschylus' plays, and adaptations of Aeschylean tragedies are often all the more interesting and noteworthy for their authors' deliberate appropriation of an Aeschylean myth. So while a great deal of excellent work has been done over the past decade on Latin American receptions of Greek tragedy, no effort has been undertaken for Aeschylus akin to that done on behalf of Sophocles or Euripides. In fact, most of the works discussed in this chapter have not been studied closely by classicists, and many of them remain, I suspect, entirely unknown to historians of classical literature as Aeschylean receptions. A great deal more thinking and research, therefore, is yet to be done in this important area before the story of Greek tragedy in the New World can be considered complete.

Despite the popularity of Greek tragic texts among Latin American playwrights and dramaturges during the twentieth century, it seems generally true that nineteenth century writers drawn to tragic themes found them primarily in French and Italian translations and adaptations.<sup>2</sup> The earliest Latin

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1 Pascual 2012 and 2013, and Herrera Díaz 2014 are useful, but ultimately incomplete starting points.

2 Pascual 2012, 189 cites the opinion of Venezuelan philosopher and essayist Andrés Bello (1781–1865) as representative of the tastes of his age: "Comparing Greek theater with that of

American translations of Aeschylus came at the hand of the Chilean Juan R. Salas, a Jesuit presbyter, who produced first in 1889 a translation of *Prometheus Bound* into Catalan verse, followed in 1904 by a translation with commentary of the *Oresteia*, *Seven against Thebes*, and *Prometheus Bound*, published by the University of Chile Press. Though historians have emphasized the completeness of Salas' translation, it should be noted that the absence of *Suppliants* and *Persians* would have a long term negative impact on the reception of these two plays in the region.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, Salas' work was extremely well received. The founding editor of the Chilean paper *El Mercurio*, Carlos Silva Vildósola, called the translation, "a monumental work, a gigantic interpretive effort and one of the greatest creations of human ingenuity." And, echoing also the opinion of the noted Spanish scholar Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, Vildósola called Salas' rendering of the song of the Daughters of Ocean in *Prometheus*, "one of the most noteworthy pieces of our literature."<sup>4</sup> But while Salas' work impressed certain circles, its impact on contemporary drama was not immediately felt: no other translations of Greek tragedies appeared in Latin America before the 1920s, and Aeschylus would have to wait until the 1940s for another translation by a Spanish-American author.

### The *Oresteia*

Aeschylus' lone surviving trilogy has received a large share of attention from Spanish-American writers of the last century.<sup>5</sup> From the 1930s to the 1950s, Mexican authors in particular produced a series of important adaptations,

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the French, it seems to us that only a blind admiration of antiquity would deprive from the latter the glory of having perfected the art in some ways."

- 3 E.g. Pascual 2012, 189 calls Salas' work "complete." In fact, the first edition of all seven plays by a Latin American translator is the version by Ángel María Garibay Kintana (Mexico: Porrúa, 1964).
- 4 For Vildósola's opinion see Vaïsse 1921 [1969], 277; for Menéndez y Pelayo, see Pascual 2012, 189.
- 5 In limiting my subject to Aeschylean receptions in the Spanish-speaking nations of the Americas, I will not discuss adaptations from Spain in this essay, but interested readers might consider Benito Pérez Galdós' *Electra* (1901), Juan María's *Orestes y yo* (1940), José María Peman's *Electra* (1949), *La Orestiada* (1959), and *Tyestes* (1955), Juan Germán Schroeder Billhère's *La esfinge furiosa* (1951), Antonio Martínez Ballesteros' *Orestiada* 39 (1960), Álvaro Cunqueiro's *Un hombre que se parecía a Orestes* (1968), Domingo Miras' *Egisto* (1971), and Ramón Gil Novales, *La urna de cristal* (1989).

beginning with Enrique García Campos' *Clitemnestra* (1938).<sup>6</sup> In his prologue to the play, García Campos reviews for his readers the many treatments of Clytemnestra's death, beginning with Aeschylus ("the old master," 14), and laments that, "I have not found in any author the slightest compassion for the Queen, Clytemnestra" (16). It is his sympathy for this "wretched soul" (18), he goes on in the prologue to explain, which compelled him to write the play, and his method was to make her his protagonist so that she might "tell her own sad tale and make evident the causes that drove her to murder" (18). The play falls into two acts, whose plot is adapted on the events of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. But the focus is shifted greatly upon Clitemnestra, whose characterization benefits from the influence of Euripides' *Medea*, especially in the lengthy second scene between the Queen and her nurse (55–79). By contrast, Agamemnon's arrival and murder are almost an afterthought to the immense psychological portrait of a grief-stricken mother, driven to take justice into her own hands.

García Campos' play reveals one of the chief difficulties in tracing Aeschylean influences in post-Classical treatments of the House of Atreus: the particular challenge in distinguishing between the influences of several extant Classical treatments of Clytemnestra's murder (by Aeschylus in the *Oresteia*, by Euripides in *Electra*, *Orestes*, and *Iphigenia in Tauris*, and by Sophocles in *Electra*), and the many subsequent retellings. Thus, we recognize in García Campos' *Clitemnestra* the Aeschylean storyline, alongside Euripidean psychology, and the Sophoclean inclusion of Chrysothemis as a speaking character and relative disinterest in Aegisthus. This amalgam of influences enriches the play's portrait of Clytemnestra, but complicates (at times inextricably) the historian's task of identifying and analyzing its intertexts. Believing, however, that even adaptations of the extant Euripidean and Sophoclean *Electra* plays are in some way also Aeschylean receptions, I will discuss all of the texts for which I have evidence (and which I have been able to examine), even when their relation to the text of Aeschylus is unclear.

García Campos' innovative focus on Clytemnestra did not prove popular among his contemporaries, who by and large preferred the points of view offered by Orestes and Electra, especially as expressed in the Euripidean and Sophoclean myths.<sup>7</sup> Miguel Barbacharro Ponce sets his *Retorna Orestes* (1945) in the context of the Mexican Revolution, turning attention away from Orestes'

6 References to García Campos' text are to the 1938 publication by Ediciones Botas (Mexico).

7 Though an *Agamemnon*, directed by Luis Baralt, was performed by the Teatro Universitario in Havana in the summer of 1952. See Miranda Cancela 2006, 47, and reviews by José Manuel Valdés Rodríguez in *Vida universitaria* 25 (1952) 16, and Rodolfo de Teatro Santovenia in *Germinal* 52 (1952) 18; cf. Verez de Peraza 1959, 53.

internal struggle and towards the country's sociopolitical crisis.<sup>8</sup> A year later (1946), Dagoberto de Cervantes began publishing his *Orestíada Actual* in three parts. A renowned voiceover actor and public intellectual, he was an influential radio personality and the Spanish voice of Captain Hook in Disney's *Peter Pan*.<sup>9</sup> The first and second parts of his *Oresteia*, *Bajo otra cruz* and *Orestes, el hombre*, both published in 1946, approximate the Aeschylean myth, though Orestes is ultimately unable to follow through with the murder (Clytemnestra's death comes about accidentally), and the Erinyes are cast as Mexican law enforcement and intelligence officers. The trilogy's final installment, *Después de nosotros*, was never published.

Maria Luisa Algarra's *Casandra o la llave sin puerta* premiered in February 1953, offering an uncompromising portrayal of bourgeois nastiness and its victims. Born in Barcelona in 1916, Algarra studied law and won the drama prize in 1935 from the University of Cataluña for her three-act play *Judith*. She began a career in journalism at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, but her fierce republicanism forced her to leave Spain for Mexico after the fall of Barcelona in 1939.<sup>10</sup> Algarra's *Casandra* built on her previous characterizations of intuitive but alienated women in *Judith* and *Sombra de alas*: her "Cassandra," Juana Cirera, is an unheeded Aeschylean doomsayer, who at first seems to articulate only the dysfunction of her own family, but ultimately appears as the mouthpiece for the author's judgment on her characters and their social class.<sup>11</sup> A few years after Algarra's play, Electra would appear in Mexico in 1957, in Luisa Josefina Hernández's *Los Huéspedes reales*. Hernández focused on the theme of incest that would become popular among her successors in the 1980s and beyond (e.g. José Ramón Enríquez, Hugo Arguëlles, and Héctor Mendoza). In a conventional 1950s Mexican household, the mother, Elena, wishes her daughter, Cecilia, to marry an older man, Juan Manuel, whom she does not love, though many other women desire him. Mother and daughter find themselves

8 Sten 2003, 53; Pascual 2012, 197.

9 Though brief mention of his work appears in Sten 2003, 53 and Pascual 2012, 197, very little has been written about "Dago" and his work. The best overall treatment of his life can be found in Najár 2015, 315–21. It should be noted that he was a close friend and colleague of Salvador Novo, author of an adaptation of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* in *Yocasta ... o casi* (Mexico, 1961).

10 Nieva-de la Paz 2014, 47.

11 Algarra's *Casandra* was staged at around the time that Héctor Mendoza (*Secretos de familia*; see below) and Emilio Carbadillo (author of an *Hipólito* from 1957, a *Medusa* from 1960, and a *Teseo* from 1962) were writing their first plays.

competing for the affection of Cecilia's father, for whom she feels an excessive devotion, in a middle-class Mexican version of the Electra complex.<sup>12</sup>

Other Mexican Orestes returned in several innovative plays from the 1980s and 1990s, beginning with José Ramón Enríquez's *Orestes parte* (1984). The play begins years after the murder of Agamemnon with the confrontation between Orestes and Clytemnestra, who is far removed from the exultant murderess of Aeschylus and Sophocles, but on the contrary recognizes that the murder of her royal husband has left her without a throne.<sup>13</sup> In order to maintain her power, she attempts to seduce Orestes but is rebuffed, with Orestes acknowledging a profound love for Pylades instead. While Aegisthus is killed by Electra, Clytemnestra is left alive at the play's end, condemned to a lifetime of self-contemplation as she combs her hair that is just starting to grey. Héctor Mendoza returned to the theme of incest in *Secretos de Familia* from 1991, but here it is not Clytemnestra but Orestes who desires the incestuous union and, rejected, assents to the matricide. Replacing fate and Apollo's divine command with human desire and will, Mendoza's Orestes has no concern for justice, but longs confusedly for his mother whom he views as both the source of and the remedy for his personal tragedy.<sup>14</sup> No less innovative is Hugo Arguëlles' *Los gallos salvajes* (1986), which adds an element of indigenous Mexican mythology to the general plot of Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*.<sup>15</sup> In Arguëlles' play, Luciano Eduardo (= Orestes) returns not to murder his mother, but rather his father Luciano Miranda ("el Gallo Rojo"), and in so doing to rid himself of the "Erinyes" that have pursued him since birth. These are characterized as the Aztec Tzitzimime, skeletal female divinities reputed to descend to earth and devour men during solar eclipses. As María Sten observes, the play lacks the motivating presences of Apollo, Electra, and Pylades, while Luciano Eduardo's mother is characterized as kind and loving.<sup>16</sup> His acts are, therefore, uniquely self-motivated, though like his other Mexican counterparts, Arguëlles' "Orestes" returns tormented by an incestuous love combined with hatred—this time for his father, who exhibits an exaggerated sexual potency characteristic of Mexican *machismo*.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, two more recent examples of Mexican Orestes myths are Miguel Ángel Canto's *Orestes o Dios no es máquina* (2000) and Juliana Faeslar's *¿Qué*

12 Magnarelli 2008, 35–52.

13 Sten 2003, 89–92 and brief mention in Pascual 2012, 197.

14 Sten 2003, 85–94 and Pascual 2012, 197.

15 Jiménez Barrera 2011.

16 Sten 2003, 53–61.

17 Jiménez Barrera 2011, 41 and *passim*.



*oyes, Orestes?* (2006). Canto's *Orestes* adapts the trilogic element of the *Oresteia* to a three-act structure: the first takes place in Argos, culminating in Orestes' killing of Clitemnestra (Egisto is only mentioned twice, and never appears); the second is set in Delphi, where the Pytho sends Orestes to Athens, and Apollo debates the working of fate with the chorus of Furies; and the third act opens in Athens, where Athena judges the family (Agamemnon and Clitemnestra both appear), marries Electra and Pylades, and forces Orestes to kill the chorus in order to become king. Her command is made in the name of "progress," which Orestes, realizing that the chorus represent his conscience, at first resists, but ultimately accepts. By contrast, Faeslar's *¿Qué oyes, Orestes?* is a minimalist drama, where the actors variously inhabit the characters of Agamemnon, Clitemnestra, Helena, Ifigenia, Electra, and Orestes, with no specific assigned roles. Through their guilt-wracked memories, they trace their story and reveal their motivations from the windless shores of Aulis, through their battles and homecomings, the murder of the king and the command of Apollo, and to the final recognition in Tauris. The drama is darkly current, offering a timeless lament for ruined capitals (from Troy and Argos to Kabul and Baghdad) and a sober assessment of modern-day humanity.

Apart from Mexico, Argentina has witnessed the greatest variety of notable *Oresteias* in Latin America. The vast majority of these have been written during the second half of the twentieth century, but we begin in November of 1930 with *Orestes I*, a four-act play by Sánchez de Neyra and Ximénez de Sandoval. The piece takes place over eight scenes, the last of which in particular mocks harshly the prevailing structures of power (Church, Army, Judiciary). Neyra's and Sandoval's "Orestes" is the ambitious but timid ruler of an imaginary (but contemporary) kingdom, Farsalia, brought to power with the assistance of his mentor, Filippo, whom Orestes betrays in the end to an angry mob. Apart from the name of its protagonist, however, the play has apparently little in common with the Orestes myth, and the town's indifference to Filippo's brutal hanging seems especially cynical; but the emphasis in the play on Orestes' place at the start of a royal dynasty, coupled with his cruel ambitions, does evoke the intergenerational curse that characterizes Aeschylus' treatment of the Atreus-Agamemnon-Orestes myth.

A much closer approximation of the *Oresteia* appeared in 1948, with Omar del Carlo's *Electra al amanecer*. The play is set in Classical Greece, though its characters wear modern costumes, and has a distinctly Euripidean coloring.<sup>18</sup> The three Furies appear as the chorus, and del Carlo introduces an unnamed ("el Desconocido") character who, in all likelihood, is Agamemnon's ghost.

18 Modern 2002, 118–21; Pascual 2012, 196.

Orestes returns without any desire for revenge and wishing only to forget, but he is driven by his sister to act. The climax occurs at a party where Electra is lavishly dressed. The ferocity of her hatred finally overwhelms Orestes, who kills Clytemnestra and Aegisthus off stage, then in the final scene dies of regret in his sister's arms.<sup>19</sup>

A decade later, novelist Eduardo Mallea would write a three-act tragedy, *El gajo de enebro* (1957), based primarily on the *Agamemnon*, and featuring a divided chorus of men and women. Cándida is Mallea's remorseless Clytemnestra, who drags her young lover to murder her husband. Moments after his burial, however, a plant springs from his grave, a symbol of the vengeance that awaits the killers. The same year as Mallea's play, David Cureses wrote *Una cruz para Electra* (1957), an unpublished play based on the Euripidean myth. Much better known than either Mallea's or Cureses' plays is Sergio de Cecco's *El reñidero* from 1962 (premiered 1964).<sup>20</sup> The play takes place in Palermo, a suburb of Buenos Aires ca 1905 marking the boundary between the city and the neighboring countryside and characterized by De Cecco as a terrifying and lawless marginal space, where differences are resolved at knifepoint. De Cecco's plot approximates the Sophoclean storyline with only the name of Orestes retained from the myth: Nélida (Clytemnestra) and her lover Soriano (Aegisthus) have conspired in the murder of Pancho Morales (Agamemnon), leaving his two children by Nélida, Elena (Electra) and Orestes to avenge his death. Like the Sophoclean heroine, Elena is obsessed with her revenge, but De Cecco's Orestes is tormented by a search for identity outside the demands of others and has no desire at first to kill Soriano. He ultimately does so only in a moment of anger, which is described in far greater detail than in Sophocles, and Nélida then impales herself upon the bloodied knife in Orestes' hand.

Four noteworthy and very different Argentine *Oresteias* from the ensuing decades are C. J. P. Pizzorno's *Tiempo al tiempo* (1983), Jorge Grasso's *Esa chica Electra (o La viuda de Daniel)* (1984/6), Ricardo Monti's *La oscuridad de la razón* (1993), and Roberto González's *La declaración de Electra* (1994). *Tiempo al tiempo* is a costumbrist drama, set (like *El reñidero*) in a dangerous suburb of Buenos Aires, this time in the 1930s.<sup>21</sup> Correa (Agamemnon), head of a powerful crime family and owner of a chain of brothels, is assassinated by his wife's lover

19 Del Carlo's contemporary and fellow playwright, Julio Imbert, also wrote an *Electra* (1952), but claimed in a preface that his play had no relation to the myth. See Modern 2002, 126–7; Pascual 2012, 196.

20 Pellettieri 1997 and 2008; Bravo de Laguna Romero 1999, 206–7; Modern 2002, 121–36; Pascual 2012, 196; Fischer 2013.

21 Sten 2003, 53.

Egidio (Aegisthus), who then falls at Orestes' hand. Besides painting an ugly picture of everyday life in an Argentine border-town, Pizzorno captures the futility of gang violence, which only and always leads to more violence, especially in a powerful final scene in which Electra removes the hoop earrings from her mother's corpse and puts them on herself. A year later, Grasso's *Esa chica Electra (o La viuda de Daniel)* was a finalist for the theater prize awarded by the Helleno-Argentine cultural institute, and recasts the Electra myth in a contemporary, middle-class Argentine setting. Monti's three-act verse tragedy, *La oscuridad de la razón*, on the other hand, sets the *Oresteia* in 1830, a full century earlier than Pizzorno's play, during the so-called "Época de Rosas."<sup>22</sup> Mariano (Orestes) returns from twenty years in France after the death of his father, and is reunited with his sister Alma (Electra) and mother María (Clytemnestra). At first, Mariano only speaks in French, but as the opening recognition scene develops, he bursts into Spanish just as he is recognized by Alma. The play then dramatizes his ambivalence towards his family, the killing of his uncle Dalmacio (Aegisthus), and the sudden suicide of María (as in De Cecco's play) in front of her son. Between the scenes, a divided chorus of "Weeping Women" ("*Lacrimosas*") and "Gentlemen" ("*Galerudos*") reinforce the darkness and secrecy of the household, and the ghost of Mariano's father, called simply "Father" ("*Padre*") appears at intervals to accuse María and Dalmacio and to encourage Mariano's revenge. The final act between the siblings and the chorus after the murder and suicide gives Mariano an opportunity for redemption and rewrites the end of the *Oresteia* as a Christian myth.

Written a year after Monti's play, Roberto González's *La declaración de Electra* (1994) is set in the 1990s. The action shifts from a cell, where Electra is being questioned by her lawyer, to the scenes of the plot as she recalls them. An expressionist drama, *La declaración de Electra* used technical cues in its premiere—colored lights and shadows—to mark the characters' emotional focus (red for Electra, green for Orestes, shadow for Clitemnestra and Egisto), in what Bravo de Laguna Romero describes as a "symbolic dreamscape."<sup>23</sup> González's Electra and Orestes exhibit the same incestuous proclivities towards their father and mother (respectively) as their contemporary Mexican counterparts (e.g. José Ramón Enríquez (1984), Héctor Mendoza (1986), and Hugo Argüelles (1991); see above). But while Orestes is ambivalent and passive, Electra's devotion to her father is juxtaposed with a fierce hatred of Clitemnestra, whom González characterizes (in Aeschylean fashion) as an embittered and ambitious woman. Perhaps the most original and interesting

22 Bravo de Laguna Romero 1999, 207–11; Pascual 2012, 196; Gambon 2014, 116–8.

23 Bravo de Laguna Romero 1999, 212.

figure in *La declaración de Electra*, however, is González's Egisto, who is not killed by Orestes, but rather abandons Clitemnestra at the end and advises Orestes to do the same. Gonzalez's contemporary, Omar Fantini wrote an *Orestes* in 1998 that combines elements from *Agamemnon* and *Libation Bearers*, with the notable alteration that Fantini's Clitemnestra is tormented by guilt for her betrayal and murder of Agamemnon. In place of a chorus, Fantini introduces two new characters to the myth: a son of Egisto, Erigone, who breaks the dramatic tension with humorous musical interludes, and a prostitute, Nauplio, who serves to chronicle the family's vengeful nightmare, but at times also directs the action.

Several plays outside of Mexico and Argentina deserve mention. Readers familiar with the subject will perhaps be surprised at the omission in my discussion so far of *Electra Garrigó* (1948), an influential adaptation of the Sophoclean myth by Cuban playwright Virgilio Piñera. The play has received particularly enthusiastic treatment by Classical scholars, and so I have passed it over here as having been discussed more extensively by far in English than any other Latin American *Electra* or *Oresteia*.<sup>24</sup> Less known, however, is *Clamor de Sombras* from 1950, by Ecuadorian playwright Ricardo Descalzi del Castillo. The psychological prose drama features a brother and sister suffering from Oedipus and Electra complexes, and won the National Theater Prize for 1950. In the Dominican Republic, Aída Cartagena Portalatín's novel *Escalera para Electra* (1969) makes frequent references to Euripides' play that contribute to its fractured, non-linear structure.<sup>25</sup> Don Plácido (Agamemnon) learns that his wife, Rosario (Clytemnestra), has been unfaithful and he kills her lover. Suspecting that his sons may be illegitimate, he sends them away and rapes Rosario, from which act of violence the novel's protagonist, a daughter, Swain, is born. When Don Plácido pursues an incestuous relationship with Swain, Rosario kills him and begins a relationship with a local doctor, Ernesto, of whom Swain soon becomes jealous (and enamored).

In Colombia, the influential theater company *La Candelaria* staged a version of *La Orestíada* in 1971, directed by Santiago García and based on a script by Carlos José Reyes that condensed the Aeschylean trilogy into 90 minutes.<sup>26</sup> Featuring an athletic cast with a minimum of costuming, García's *Orestíada*

24 Miranda Cancela 1990 and 2006, 53–68; Cabrera 2011–12; Pascual 2012, 196 and n. 30; Andujar 2015.

25 Pascual 2012, 198; Tripathi 2012. Cartagena Portalatín's second novel, *La tarde en que murió Estefanía* (1984) adapts elements of *Antigone* in a similar fashion.

26 The script was not, as Reyes confirmed in an interview (Mesa and Prada 2004, 281), translated from the Greek, but adapted from one of the available Spanish translations.

drew heavily on the physical exercises prescribed by Jerzy Grotowski, with whose gestural theories the company had been training for over a year. Clytemnestra and her daughters reappeared a decade later in Albalucía Ángel's *Las andariegas* (1984), a feminist novel that seeks to right the wrongs of patriarchy by rewriting classic myths. A group of wandering women revisit significant mythological contexts (including the story of Electra and Clytemnestra) in search for unity with foundational female literary characters whose lives, traditionally told by men, are re-enacted and thereby reclaimed as feminist texts.<sup>27</sup> In Chile, Marco Antonio de la Parra wrote and produced *La tierra insomne o la Orestíada de Chile* in 1998, a politically-charged play focusing, like Algarra's *Cassandra* (Mexico 1957; see above), on the character of Cassandra. As Resha Cardone has argued, the play dramatizes the role of the human body in the formation of collective memory, a subject of widespread interest among Chilean artists in the post-Pinochet years.<sup>28</sup> Another politically-motivated Chilean *Electra* appeared in 2005 in Benjamín Galemiri's *Infamante Electra*: the one act play explores the relationship between Joseph Halevi (Agamemnon), a onetime senator accused of fraud, and his daughter Dafne Halevi Toledo (Electra), a brilliant and ambitious young attorney who takes up his defense.<sup>29</sup>

In 2007, nearly 60 years after Piñera's *Electra*, Yerandy Fleites Pérez brought the *Oresteia* back to Cuba in *Jardín de héroes* (2007; published 2009), a play that seems to reject its place in the Classical tradition of Electra plays and embrace instead elements of indigenous folklore.<sup>30</sup> Orestes returns at the advice of Apollo's Oracle, but it is not desire for revenge or justice that motivates him, but fear for his roosters who have begun dying mysteriously. Finally, Cuban-American poet Magali Alabau adapted elements of the Aeschylean myth in two collections of poems, *Electra, Clitemnestra* (1986) and *Hemos llegado a Ilión* (1992; republished 2013).

### *Seven against Thebes*

Among the Theban myths, the story of Eteocles and Polyneices has not enjoyed the same popularity among Latin American writers as either their father's or their sister's tragedies. But Anton Arrufat's *Los siete contra Tebas* (Cuba, 1968) is an important exception. Arrufat wrote his version of Aeschylus' *Seven against*

27 Osorio 2007 and 2010, 125–7.

28 Cardone 2005.

29 Medina Bravo 2011.

30 Cabrera 2011/2012, 12–7.

*Thebes* against the backdrop of Castro's revolutionary reforms and the failed American-led Bay of Pigs invasion of 1962. The play won the José Antonio Ramos prize from the Cuban writers' and artists' guild and was published according to the contest rules, but two of the five judges condemned the play as counter-revolutionary and the published text was accompanied by a preface rejecting its apparently ideology. While Arrufat's play has never been performed in Cuba, there have been a number of important studies of *Los Siete*, examining especially its post-revolutionary political context and documenting its appropriation of the Classical models.<sup>31</sup> The play makes several departures from the Aeschylean *Seven*, bringing the seven Theban champions on stage as speaking characters during the shield-scene, and featuring an emotional *agon* between Étéocles and Polinice that strongly invokes Euripides' *Phoenissae*. Arrufat also omits the controversial final scene between Antigone, Ismene, and the Herald, choosing instead to end the play with the surviving Thebans and the individuated chorus mourning and burying *both* brothers.

I add with some trepidation *La tarde en que murió Estefanía*, the second novel (1984) by the Dominican novelist Aída Cartagena Portalatín (author of *Escalera para Electra*; see above), as another possible reception of the Aeschylean *Seven*. In one of her final interviews, Cartagena Portalatín credited Aeschylus for inspiring the characters of Estefanía and her sister, Alegira, who are very much like Antigone and Ismene. While Antigone and Ismene do appear, of course, in the pseudo-Aeschylean epilogue to *Seven against Thebes*, it has not been established whether this scene (rather than the more famous Sophoclean treatment of Antigone) indeed influenced Cartagena Portalatín's characterization of the Montes sisters.

### *Suppliants and Persians*

The absence of these two plays from Juan R. Salas' 1889 and 1904 translations of Aeschylus seems to have ensured their relative obscurity among Spanish American writers, and little evidence can be found either of adaptation or re-performance of *Suppliants* in particular. But as with Arrufat's *Siete*, a Cuban playwright offers perhaps very notable early evidence for the influence of *Persians*. On January 23, 1869, at the age of only sixteen, José Martí published the patriotic play *Abdala* in his newspaper *La Patria Libre*. It was the only issue of the paper, but the play appeared at an auspicious moment: the two previous

31 Bejel 1978, 1979, and 1991; Escarpanter 1990; Estévez 1992; Barquet 1995, and 2002; Álvarez Morán and Iglesias Montiel 1999; Miranda Cancela 2006, 130–1; Torrance 2007 and 2015.

nights, on January 21 and 22, productions at the Villanueva Theater in Havana had erupted into violence between loyalists and factions favoring Cuban independence, the second time leading to a massacre by the Volunteer Corps of countless theater-going civilians. Martí's writings leave no ambiguity of his Classical influences, publishing political commentaries in the Mexican broadsheet under the pseudonym "Orestes," but *Abdala* is a special case. The play in verse tells the story of the warrior prince of a fictitious African republic, committed to sacrificing his life to save his country from a foreign invader. The Aeschylean character of *Abdala* is subtextual, but evocative of *Persians* in several respects. The play abounds in patriotic sentiments, defining Abdala's love of country as an invincible hatred for invaders and oppressors, and speaking openly in its desire for liberty and independence. The presence of a powerful female figure in Abdala's mother offers a further link with the Aeschylean protagonist Atossa, though their situations in the two plays are significantly different. Years later, Martí would write about the "splendid hopes and magnificent punishments" that are a vital part of the theater and that serve to strengthen communities, adding that audiences "respond to this element in Aeschylus."<sup>32</sup>

More recently, another Cuban, Raúl de Cárdenas has adapted Aeschylus' *Persians* in *Los hijos de Ochún* (1998), which recasts the tragic episode of the Bay of Pigs using Afro-Cuban mythology.<sup>33</sup> The play dramatizes the rivalry between brothers Changó (the Yoruba sky god, representing ousted former dictator Fulgencio Batista) and Ogún (the metalworker and warrior god, representing Fidel Castro). Xerxes is recast as the twins Taebo and Kainde, the sons of Changó, and Atossa as Ochún, the Afro-Cuban mother goddess, whom Santería identifies as Our Lady of Charity. Returning from exile to Cuba to claim their birthright, Taebo and Kainde accuse Ogún of betraying his country, but Kainde is captured and executed, while Taebo escapes into exile again. De Cárdenas divides the lyrics between a chorus of Miami and a chorus of Havana, and the play ends with Ochún receiving the body of her son draped with the Cuban flag, and Taebo praising his brother's courage and sacrifice. Like Martí's *Abdala*, *Los hijos de Ochún* uses patriotic rhetoric borrowed from *Persians* to deliver its message in favor of Cuban democracy.

Given Martí's particular significance in Cuban political and literary history, and the relative paucity of Spanish-American adaptations of *Persians* these two plays would certainly reward a closer inspection of their Aeschylean elements.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Miranda Cancela 2006, 25.

<sup>33</sup> González-Pérez 2007, 96–8.

### *Prometheus Bound*

Long before uncertainties emerged surrounding its authorship, the pseudo-Aeschylean *Prometheus Bound* enjoyed a widespread and notably early reception history among Spanish American authors. Even before Salas' masterful 1889 and 1904 translations of the play, in fact, the Cuban poet Julián de Casal had written two quite different poetic treatments of the myth in *Las Océánidas* (1880) and *Prometeo* (1891), which embraced elements of Aeschylus' play alongside sentiments adapted from romantic treatments of Prometheus by Byron (1816) and Shelley (1820). *Las Océánidas* was written first, a lengthy poem in four parts, which alludes to *Prometheus Bound* at several key moments. Besides the poem's title, which explicitly recalls the Aeschylean chorus, the imagery of surf beating the shore recurs throughout the poem and evokes the presence of Ocean himself as a character in Aeschylus' play.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the physical description of Prometheus chained to his rock especially echoes Aeschylus' prologue, and when he addresses the *océánidas* in the poem's third part, he admits his great pain and calls Zeus a coward, swearing to endure. By contrast, written a decade later and inspired by a symbolist painting by French artist Gustave Moreau ("Prometheus," 1868), Casal's sonnet *Prometheus*, characterizes the hero as utterly indifferent to his torment. In the second line of the poem, he is explicitly compared to Christ on the cross and does not even glance at the vulture that devours him, but stares out to sea envisioning his coming redemption. Casal makes no allusion to Zeus or to the reason for Prometheus' torment, but offers a powerful image of patience and fortitude, in sharp contrast to the "conquered Prometheus" in the final line of *Océánidas*. These two poems set the stage for over a century of Latin American Prometheuses: some, as in *Océánidas* will be political actors, representations of human progress and freedom (especially from tyranny); others, as in *Prometheus*, will be philosophers of the human condition, whose experience of suffering without yielding is equally a sort of triumph.

The earliest of these, the lyric tragedy *La Prometheida o Las Oceanides* (1917) by the Bolivian poet and philosopher Franz Tamayo is unique in several respects.<sup>35</sup> Most significantly, the character of Prometheus never appears on stage. Tamayo's protagonist is instead the love-struck Psyche who, along with the chorus of Oceanids, is searching for Prometheus. A new generation of young Olympians—Ares, Apollo, and Athena—appear to her, and explain that she may be united with him in death. Prometheus' absence has been

34 Miranda Cancela 1983, 21–2.

35 Pascual 2012, 192.



read as Tamayo's comment on Bolivia's frustrating lack of social and industrial progress following the tin boom of the early twentieth-century. A year later, Peruvian poet Alberto Guillén published his first book of poetry, *Prometeo* (1918), whose opening poem began "Prometheus is a symbol." As in Aeschylus' play, Guillén's Prometheus is the source of all human knowledge and creativity, a defiant fist raised against divinity and destiny, and the poem quotes Aeschylus explicitly in two places: first without citation in the description of the steep, abandoned cliff where, Guillén writes, all Prometheuses suffer, and again explicitly in the sentiment that gods need not fear the anger of gods. Like Tamayo's *Prometheida*, José Vasconcelos' *Prometeo Vencedor* (Mexico, 1920) is a philosophical meditation on power, tyranny, and freedom, and an allegorical comment on human progress, but Vasconcelos espouses a distinct pessimism. The first act is set between the volcanic peaks of Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl: Prometheus and Satan are discussing the fecundity of suffering and the sterility of pleasure, when they are joined by an anonymous Philosopher, who praises the new humanism arising in Latin America but admits that progress will be slow so long as any Latin countries remain enslaved. In the second and third acts, a new figure Saturnino pursues this pessimistic line to deny the procreative instinct and remains the last survivor on earth. While the play contains little dramatic action, the weighty ideas of the Aeschylean *Prometheus* abound: the hope for an end to tyranny, the inevitability of change, and (a distinctly Nietzschean twist) the solitude of great figures and reformers.

Pascual has commented that after such a promising start to the century and just as the Spanish American theater seemed to be developing a tangible interest in classical myths, Prometheus appears largely to disappear from the stage.<sup>36</sup> She notes only two Prometheuses from the second half of the last century, the Dominican Hector Incháustegui Cabral's *Prometeo* (1959) and the Argentine Juan José Santillán's *Prometeo, Hasta el cuello* (2008). But in fact, many other plays adapt the Prometheus myth in important ways, beginning with an important production of Aeschylus' play in 1956 Cuba, directed by Luis Baralt, a professor of Philosophy and Aesthetics and founder of the "La Cueva" theater company.<sup>37</sup> In the midst of the Cuban Revolution, Prometheus' rebellion against the tyranny of Zeus offered an instructive and relevant analogy, and for it, Baralt designed an elaborate set made up of multiple, uneven horizontal platforms with Prometheus tied to his rock upon the uppermost platform. A few years later, Hector Incháustegui Cabral wrote the Dominican Republic's

36 Pascual 2012, 193.

37 Miranda Cancela 2006, 47–9. Baralt's production of *Prometheus* would be the penultimate production of the University Theater.

first tragedy, *Prometeo* (1959), the first of a trilogy of classically-inspired plays (entitled *Miedo en un puñado de polvo*) that would include a *Filoctetes* from 1960 and an *Hipólito* from circa 1961.<sup>38</sup> All three plays feature protagonists at odds with society and its norms, and the three-act *Prometeo* espouses a distinct socio-political agenda, reflecting the fear endured by citizens of the Dominican Republic during the final years of Rafael Trujillo's dictatorship, before his assassination in 1961. Incháustegui Cabral's *Prometeo* is not the physically imposing titan of Aeschylus' play, but in fact an invalid confined to a wheelchair, who rejects tradition and refuses to assimilate for fear of losing his identity. Like Aeschylus' philanthropic Prometheus, he aims to preserve human individuality from the abuses and conformity imposed by the state, represented by his tyrannical father.

Three adaptations of *Prometheus* appeared in the 1960s, beginning in Peru with Juan Ríos' *El Fuego* (1961), which takes place during Peru's Wars for Independence (1811–1821) and concerns a naval officer persecuted for his belief in liberty. Ríos' Prometheus is a Fugitive at odds with his Captain because he espouses individual liberty, even if that means mutiny and death. He threatens to arm the citizen farmers and to mount a fiery assault on the capitol. A few years later, in 1965, José Ricardo Morales wrote *Hay una nube en su future* (Chile). The characters of Morales' two-act apocalyptic satire include Prometheus, a Muse, a Government Official (from the "Ministry of Confusion"), and a robot named Saú. In a brief epilogue, after a meltdown in his factory has annihilated humankind, Prometheus and the Muse decide that perhaps they should wait before recreating the race. A decade later, in the Dominican Republic, Franklin Domínguez wrote *Omar y los demás* (1975), an expressionist drama in seven scenes, presenting episodes from Omar's old age, death, funeral, and last rites. Domínguez's Omar shares a great deal with Aeschylus' Prometheus: he rebels against a tyrannical god whose omnipotence nevertheless denies humankind many necessities; and as he prepares to die, Omar embraces the "blind hope" that is explicitly the Aeschylean Prometheus' first gift to mortals, as a defense against fear of death (PV 252).

Finally, two more recent productions include Juan José Santillán's *Prometeo, Hasta el cuello* (Argentina, 2008) and Fernando Miele's film, *Prometeo Deportado* (Ecuador, 2009). Santillán's *Hasta el cuello* is set in Buenos Aires during the unstable and violent 1960s: Augusto Pontani (Prometheus) is under house arrest after being captured by his comrades Rodríguez and González (Bia and Hephaestus) in possession of a secret belonging to his leader Solano (Zeus). Alone in a tiny apartment, evocative of Prometheus' lonely mountainside,

38 Smith 1986; Nuñez 2005; Gallardo Saborido 2007.

Pontani is visited by a series of figures that adapt the Aeschylean cast to various Argentine political factions, the revolutionary Silvina (the Oceanids), the exiled Eugenia (Io), and the political opportunist Basualdo (Oceanus);<sup>39</sup> but only his knowledge of Solano's secret keeps him alive. Produced a year later (2009), Miele's *Prometeo Deportado* is set in a contemporary, but anonymous EU country, where a group of Ecuadorian nationals await deportation in a small airport room. Among them is a young man in handcuffs, Wilson Prometeo, who claims to be the world's greatest escape artist. As time passes, and more Ecuadorians arrive, the room becomes less hospitable and its inhabitants more desperate until their names, stories, motivations, and fears begin to emerge. In the end Wilson, assisted by a prostitute named Afrodite Zambrano, offers to help the group escape through his magic.

### Conclusions

The variety and ingenuity of these texts can hardly be exaggerated. While Mexico and Argentina stand out as sites of considerable interest in adapting the *Oresteia* and its related myths, nearly every country in Latin America has contributed something of note to the proliferation of Aeschylean receptions in past half-century. Though such diversity of subjects and contexts defies synthesis, three trends stand out especially.

The majority of scholars working on the history of the Latin American theater have with good reason emphasized the plays' socio-political contexts, citing the unique ability of the tragic genre to describe violence and employ a mournful tone to commemorate and purge the often ugly processes of nation-building.<sup>40</sup> Most Aeschylean receptions in Latin America also reflect on the cultural/political issues of their time: social class, in Algarra's *Cassandra* and Hernández' *Los huespedes reales* (both from 1950s Mexico); gender and sexuality, in, for example, the regularity of the imagery of the "cock fight" in De Cecco (Argentina, 1962/4), Arguëlles (Mexico, 1986), Fleites (Cuba, 2007/9); the myth of progress, in Tamayo's Bolivian *Prometheida* (1917) and nearly a century later, in Canto's Mexican *Orestes* (2000); the epidemic of violence, in the many Argentine *Oresteias*, especially those of the 1960s-1990s by De Cecco, Pizzorno, Grasso, and Monti; the corruption of government, in the Chilean Prometheus by Morales (1965) and *Infamante Electra* by Galemiri (2005); the need to resist foreign invasion, in the Cuban versions of *Persians* by Martí (1869) and

39 Pascual 2012, 193.

40 Taylor 1991 and Dove 2004 are two good examples of this approach.

Cardenas (1998), and in Arrufat's *Siete* (1968); and the struggles against tyranny in the Prometheus myths by Inchaústegui (DR, 1959), Ríos (Peru, 1961), and Santillan (Argentina, 2008). Second, alongside the plays' political messages, one can see in many texts a post-colonial, emancipatory discourse similar to the one employed in West African adaptations of Greco-Roman literature.<sup>41</sup> Tragedy's privileged position in the European (i.e. colonizing) canon and its inherent similarities with some indigenous mythological traditions makes possible a fusion between the two that allows Spanish American authors to craft a specific national literary identity. Indeed, the effort to combine the classical material with indigenous cultural practices, including mythology and folklore is a hallmark of Latin American receptions and certainly one of the genre's most innovative elements.<sup>42</sup> We can see it at work in the plays by writers in Mexico (Vasconcelos, de Cervantes, Hernández, Arguëlles, Mendoza), Argentina (De Cecco, Mallea, and Fleites), Cuba (Cardenas), and Colombia (Ángel). Third, is the rewriting of classical myths as Christian texts, a discursive strategy that contrasts in some ways with the indigenization described above. Neyra's and Sandoval's *Orestes I* (Argentina, 1930), for example, and Monti's *Oscuridad de la razón* (Argentina, 1993) are examples of this manner of adaptation, two Argentine appropriations of the Orestes myth that recast the story in Christian terms. The tendency is even more explicit in the adaptations of the Prometheus myth by, for example, Casal (Cuba, 1868) and Domínguez (DR, 1975).

Each of these aspects of the tragic tradition in Latin American would benefit from further study and add to our understanding of an important but still largely underappreciated genre. This is particularly true of the many inventive receptions of *Prometheus Bound*, which have received surprisingly little critical attention, even among hispanophone scholars. But if anything especially distinguishes the Latin American reception of Aeschylus from that of Sophocles and Euripides, it is the diversity of readings and responses to this idiosyncratic play. Beginning with Salas' influential translation, hailed by critics as "one of the most noteworthy pieces of our literature," more Spanish translations of *Prometheus Bound* have appeared than of any other Aeschylean tragedy. From 1940 to 1980, over a dozen translations of *Prometheus* were published (in Argentina, Mexico, Peru, and Spain), sometimes alongside new translations of all seven plays,<sup>43</sup> but just as often separately from the other

41 Budelmann 2005, 121–4.

42 On similar hybridization in South African receptions, see Wetmore this volume.

43 Especially noteworthy and influential translations of the extant tragedies in this period include those by Jorge Montsiá (Barcelona: Iberia, 1948), Ángel Maria Garibay Kintana

six tragedies. These included the first reprinting of Salas' translation in nearly forty years (Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe, 1941), as well as new translations by José Solá, S. J. (Barcelona: Montaner y Simón, 1943), Miguel Balagué (Madrid: Bibliográfica Española, 1944), Juan David García Bacca (Mexico: SEP, 1946), Luis Álvarez Torres (Lima: Escuela Nacional de Arte Escénico, 1957), and E. Ignacio Granero (Mendoza: Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, 1963). It should not perhaps surprise us that the long-suffering, defiant, and philanthropic figure of Prometheus would draw the interest of authors and intellectuals in these politically and socially tumultuous decades, when military juntas, nationalist strongmen, and tyrannical autocrats ruled, when revolutions promised but failed to deliver change, and when economic and technological progress was often frustratingly slow. These same decades saw performances of *Prometheus* in Cuba (Luis Baralt dir., 1956) and Peru (Luis Álvarez Torres dir., 1957), and the adaptations we have discussed by Hector Incháustegui Cabral (DR, 1959), Juan Ríos (Peru, 1961), and José Ricardo Morales (Chile, 1965).

Clearly, there remains a great deal of work to do, and in offering an overview of the field instead of a single detailed case-study, this chapter has sought to stimulate rather than satisfy. Nevertheless, if readers have gained a fuller appreciation for the richness and diversity of the Aeschylean tradition and cultivated a healthy skepticism towards the popular myth that Sophoclean or Euripidean tragedy is somehow more accessible, more adaptable, or more relevant, then this survey will have met its goal.

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## Avatars of Aeschylus: O'Neill to Herzog/Golder

Marianne McDonald

### Introduction: The Rational and the Irrational

It is forbidden to kill; therefore, all murderers are punished unless they kill in large numbers and to the sound of trumpets.

VOLTAIRE

Eugene O'Neill's play *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931), and a film based on a true story, devised by Werner Herzog and Herbert Golder, *My Son, My Son, What Have Ye Done* (2009), are each incarnations of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* (458 BCE). Plays on stage make for a sharp contrast with film, given its technical capacities for shifting times and places; both modern works in their own ways expand (though some might say narrow) the original trilogy. These modern avatars reflect different interpretive approaches that explore views of justice by reshaping Aeschylus' famous and influential vision. The women in these later versions do not equal Aeschylus' Clytemnestra in her majesty. However, the men can be softer and gentler than Aeschylus' male protagonists, though in some cases possessed by neuroses and madness to a greater degree. An Electra who also seems madder than in Aeschylus dominates O'Neill's version more than the Greek original, while in Herzog, Electra is absent. Their representations often reflect the lives of the modern authors, and their complicated relationships to their own families.

The Athenians thought writing plays was an extension of a playwright's citizenship, and a way of exercising his share in the city. Aeschylus' tombstone shows us he fought at Marathon, but not that he was a playwright. His heroism in defending his city merited this memorial—yet in his lifetime, he was among the most honored of dramatists and his plays continued to be performed after his death. Not only, then, did he contribute to his city, his work has come down to share with us the values Athens established. For us, given such evidence as we have, the life and the work are integral: Aeschylus was proud, brave, and had a fierce sense of justice—one based on unknowable gods who worked in mysterious ways; and justice is a prominent theme in all three sections of the *Oresteia*. The first play shows us the “payback-justice” murder of Agamemnon; the next, Orestes obeying Apollo's command to avenge his father; and the

last, his trial and acquittal by a newly-founded law court, the Aeropagus. In 462 BCE, only four years before the first production of the *Oresteia*, Athens limited the powers of the ancient Areopagus, restricting its aristocratic, political powers to make it a court that tried mainly homicide and sacrilege. This change was part of the period of democratization in Attica,<sup>1</sup> and this court defined a new embodiment of justice for the Athenians to reflect their democratic (and imperialistic) ideals.<sup>2</sup>

The *Oresteia* can be seen as an optimistic reflection of this process since Orestes is acquitted and the Furies tamed. But as Peter Green tells us:

[The Furies] sat demurely while a civic committee put fancy costumes on them, and offered them a niche under the Acropolis. Then, the moment it was dark, they winged their way back to the place from which it had taken aeons to remove them—the inner recesses of the human mind—and there they have remained ever since, defying all efforts to remove them.<sup>3</sup>

The Furies have never been tamed; they lurk in the hearts and minds of men, shadows of the conscious. No law court or cult ritual will eliminate vengeance and war; they reappear again and again as both O'Neill and Herzog/Golder understand profoundly. Religion, far from taming the Furies, has occasionally awakened them; some of the most violent vengeful wars have been those fought in the name of religion.

The greatest difference between O'Neill's and Herzog/Golder's versions and Aeschylus' *Oresteia* is that the modern versions show, even more emphatically than in Aeschylus', how man's irrationality can be the dominant, even uncontrollable, factor in their characters' lives. The Greeks gave us philosophy and the rudiments of science, much based on observation, not belief. It was a society that prided itself on the discoveries made by man's reason.<sup>4</sup> For example, as E. R. Dodds saw, however much Plato was indebted to the Pythagoreans and to Greek shamanism for their ideas of the irrational soul in man, "it was Plato himself who, by a truly creative act, transposed these ideas definitively from the plane of revelation to the plane of rational argument."<sup>5</sup> Competing with the philosophers, of course, were the cults and superstitions of Athens.<sup>6</sup> Many

1 Raafflaub, Ober, Wallace 2007, 105–54.

2 Kennedy 2009, 22–3.

3 Green 1972, 42–3.

4 Snell 1967 [1982] 47–69; Lloyd-Jones 1971.

5 Dodds 1951, 209.

6 Kennedy 2009, ch. 1; Dodds 1951; contra A. W. Verrall 1895.

scholars, in addition to Dodds, to say nothing of Euripides, have seen the link between the gods and the irrational, and without this irrationality it is doubtful we would have Greek tragedy. Aeschylus had a vivid understanding of how irrationality can ruin human lives, and in *Eumenides* the gods render their verdicts according to their biases (e.g., Athena towards the male) rather than logic.

It seems in modern times insanity can be a prized possession, and cultivated rather than cured, or redirected as Freud and other therapists tried. Killers can be made into heroes, as Sondheim noted in his musical *Assassins*. Hitchcock, for another example, made the movie *Rope*, based on the true story of two privileged college students, Nathan Leopold and Richard Lobe, who committed the first “thrill kill” in America. Television continued the hero worship of the irrational in its series *Dexter* that sympathetically narrates the adventures of serial killer. Drones replace ancient hand-to-hand combat: the enemy is now faceless. (No guilt: the robot did it, to say nothing of the Marines in *Generation Kill* who are human killing machines.) Madness becomes an industry as Foucault rightly pointed out.<sup>7</sup>

One also sees the change between antiquity and modern times in Euripides' *Medea* (431 BCE) and Jules Dassin's *Dream of Passion* (1978).<sup>8</sup> Medea rationally articulates what she is about to do:

I know what evil I'm about to do,  
But my passion is stronger than my reason.

EUR. MED. 1078–9<sup>9</sup>

What makes the Euripidean Medea so powerful is that she knows what she is doing, and that “rationality” will add to her suffering. Bruno Snell used this passage to articulate the conflict between Passion and Reason, writing, in *The Discovery of the Mind*, about the role that fifth-century Greek philosophy played in shaping man's intellect. By contrast, in Homer, the gods seemed responsible for man's decisions, even if it was no more than Athena's grabbing Achilles by his hair to get him to listen (*Il.* 1.193–6)—recall that Alfred North Whitehead once claimed that all philosophy after the Greeks consisted of footnotes to Plato.<sup>10</sup> By contrast, Dassin's film, *Dream of Passion*, shows a Medea who is completely deranged and in prison for her murder of her children.

Aeschylus in his *Oresteia* sanctioned rationality, while at the same time understanding the presence of irrationality:

<sup>7</sup> Foucault 1979.

<sup>8</sup> Padel 1995; Howard 1965; Simon 1988.

<sup>9</sup> McDonald, trans. 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Snell 1967, 1982.

Zeus, who showed man the path of knowledge,  
 Decreed he must learn through suffering;  
 He drips the pain of remembered sorrow  
 Into the hearts of sleepless men,  
 And even the unwilling gain understanding.  
 This is the violent grace of the gods,  
 Who sit on high like helmsmen,  
 Guiding the course of man.

*AGAMEMNON*, 174–83<sup>11</sup>

The underlying premise was not only that man could learn but that ethics were taught by the gods, whether man wanted to learn or not. Aeschylus adds, “Sing sorrow, sorrow, but may the good prevail” (*Agamemnon*, 159).<sup>12</sup> For the good to prevail one needs ethics in addition to reason. By contrast, O’Neill’s and Herzog/Golder’s modern protagonists learn nothing, but repeat their destructive patterns.

Other reasons for comparatively less emphasis on insanity in antiquity might be that with limited resources in ancient Athens, many had to struggle for survival itself. There was not the luxury of leisure time to cultivate madness, nor even to support those afflicted by it. Defective children were eliminated, and others simply exiled, as Orestes was for a while because of his pollution. In ancient Athens, there was no industrial revolution to lead to more and more easily-built weapons of mass destruction, nor an internet to broadcast atrocities to the world, inspiring copycat crimes. The modern world is much more populated than the ancient world, and also news travels exponentially faster. We may simply not know about insanity in the ancient world, but it didn’t seem to have the heroic quality it does in modern times. Madness could be blamed on the gods, as if man might know better or hope for better luck.<sup>13</sup> O’Neill and Herzog/Golder do not adhere precisely to the story of the house of Atreus as Aeschylus rendered it, but they seem to be attempting to balance the rational and irrational along the edge of justice. However, more often than not, these modern heroes fall into chaos and madness.

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<sup>11</sup> McDonald and Walton 2007, 8.

<sup>12</sup> McDonald and Walton 2007, 7.

<sup>13</sup> Padel 1995.

### O'Neill's Personal *Oresteia*

The *Oresteia* lingers behind O'Neill in structure (the trilogy), storyline (fall of the house), and in the intertwined themes of justice and sanity/insanity. But the plays diverge in a number of ways, in part because of O'Neill's personal biography and the underlying Christian guilt attached to suicide and addiction within his family, themes that alter the Aeschylean characters dramatically. In *Mourning Becomes Electra*, O'Neill reflects the discontent following the Civil War, including the assassination of Lincoln, which he establishes as a parallel to the murder of Ezra Mannon (Agamemnon), the patriarch of the house, much as Aeschylus parallels the sack of Troy and the destruction of the house of Atreus. This is followed by the suicide of the mother, Christine (Clytemnestra) after the murder of her lover, Adam Brant (Aegisthus) by her own children, Lavinia (Electra) and Orin (Orestes).

Orin, who suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder from his wound and war experiences, not only throws himself into killing his mother's lover with gusto, but finally commits suicide when he sees his sister wanting to find happiness with a family friend. Orin had not only wanted his mother to himself, in what seems a clearly incestuous relationship, but also, after her death, focuses his lust on his sister as a substitute. He is again rejected—as though he went from being Oedipus to his true role as Orestes. Christine, however, rejected the family, and Lavinia wanted to replace her mother in her father's affection. Lavinia (nicknamed Vinnie in the play) is briefly attracted by the notion of trying to find happiness with Peter (a family friend), only to end up taunting him and lying to him, as if she were possessed by the spirits of the dead, Furies of another sort, haunting the Mannon ancestral home.

After having destroyed the family, Lavinia finally chooses living entombment in her family's mansion: "I'll live alone with the dead, and keep their secrets, and let them hound me, until the curse is paid out and the last Mannon is let die! (*with a strange cruel smile of gloating over the years of self-torture*) I know they will see to it I live for a long time! It takes the Mannons to punish themselves for being born."<sup>14</sup> In this play the Furies will claim not only Orin, but also Vinnie—family is what haunts here in the guise of Mannon ghosts. Vinnie's choice of entombment in the house reminds one of Sophocles' *Antigone*, bringing us back again to the curse-haunted house of Oedipus.

The three parts of the play—"Homecoming," "The Hunted," and "The Haunted"—parallel the *Agamemnon*, followed by the *Libation Bearers*, and the *Eumenides*. "Homecoming" features Ezra Mannon's victorious return from

14 O'Neill 1988, 1053.

the war, though unlike Agamemnon, he comes back without a concubine and is actually repentant for any former coldness to his wife. This is very different from the *Agamemnon*, where the formal opening speeches of husband and wife seem more directed to the people around them than to each other. “The Hunted” is action-filled, as is the *Libation Bearers*, and both end with the mother dead, Clytemnestra murdered and Christine a suicide. The ghost of Clytemnestra appears in the *Eumenides* to spur the Furies on to seek revenge on Orestes, while the “haunting” in the last part of O’Neill’s trilogy seems to be imagined, although enacted by many allusions to it—for example, when Abner Small, a friend of Seth’s (the caretaker), exclaims: “God A’mighty! I heard ‘em comin’ after me, and I run in the room opposite, an’ I seed Ezra’s ghost like a judge comin’ through the wall—and by God, I run!”<sup>15</sup>

The American Civil War was a good backdrop for this trilogy of murder and haunting in part because it allowed for a large colonial house with Greek columns as an important addition to both the staged productions and later video productions. Brigadier-General Ezra Mannon, who also had been a judge, had the support and prestige of his people that Agamemnon did. However, he was not the leader of the entire war, as Agamemnon was against Troy. Here, also, the juxtaposition of race and slavery, with the Civil War as background, creates the racist concept of Mannon “purity” being preserved at all cost. The servants and the townspeople celebrated the victory of the North over the South in their alcoholic revels. In both the Trojan War and the Civil War there were racial issues (in the former, Greeks against the barbarians);<sup>16</sup> this adds to the moral ambiguity of Mannon “justice” against Brandt, a mulatto for whom ostensibly a war of liberation was just fought.

The white make-up that O’Neill specifies sets the Mannons apart with their particular purity, and in its own way replicates the Greek mask. The special, expressionless, Mannon gaze covers their secrets. The stage instructions say when Christine first appears, “One is struck at once by the strange impression it [her face] gives in repose of being not living flesh but a wonderful life-like pale mask, in which only the deep-set eyes of a dark violet blue, are alive ...” and Ames, a character comments, “Secret lookin’—’s if it was a mask she’d put on. That’s the Mannon look. They all has it. They grow it on their wives.”<sup>17</sup>

The *Oresteia* touched a creative nerve in O’Neill, with its use of masks and what they concealed as well as what they revealed. He said: “Ones outer life passes in a solitude haunted by the masks of others—ones inner life passes in

15 O’Neill 1988, 1011.

16 Hall 1989. On racism in antiquity, see Isaac 2004 and, contra, Gruen 2011.

17 O’Neill 1988, 896.

a solitude hounded by the masks of oneself." As O'Neill turned more and more inward, he saw it was there he could find truth. Paradoxically, theatre itself became the mask from behind which he could reveal himself. The relation of mask to identity is therefore emphasized throughout in how both mother and daughter in this trilogy come to resemble each other. So also, Orin plays his father in his role of judge, and chronicles the family misdeeds to coerce Lavinia into spending her life with him. Under such pressure, the children come to assume the masks—the roles, even—of their parents, rather like fulfilling the curse of the house of Mannon (paralleling the curse on the house of Atreus but with no court to save, or even condemn them, except themselves).

The *Oresteia* echoes throughout O'Neill's trilogy in the major characters' names: Ezra Mannon for Agamemnon, Orin for Orestes. At times the echoes are fainter with just a significant common letter shared between them: Adam Brant for Aegisthus, Peter for Pylades, and Lavinia for Electra, although the last two names are not as obvious in their relationship to the original classical characters. Other names are biblical or related to Christianity—Christine, for Clytemnestra, in a way reflects O'Neill's own mother, who is invoked by her real and just as emphatically Christian name, Mary, in his autobiographical play, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. O'Neill's use of the ancient classics works together with his equally powerful sense of a Christian present.

According to O'Neill, Lavinia's name refers to the Lavinia in the *Aeneid*, because he found it a variation of Laodice, a daughter of Agamemnon's who in later versions of the mythical tradition became Electra, and meaning "justice of the people." This Lavinia seeks what she considers a just revenge on her mother for killing her father and then—deservedly, as she sees it—punishes herself by her isolation and ceaseless mourning for the rest of her life in the Mannon house. She shuts the windows, making the house a tomb for the living—with shuttered windows, a tomb for the living in darkness. Her guilt demanded lifelong punishment, something that attracted O'Neill himself. The irrationality of the modern period contrasts with the possibility of a law court and acquittal in the *Eumenides*.

His world forbade O'Neill the hopeful and benign authority expressed in all the ideals he held close in his youth: the Catholic Church, God, and any potential for a family. His father was an Irish immigrant, James O'Neill, an actor famous for playing the role of Edmond Dantès, the hero in a play based on Alexander Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*. He was a philandering drunk (rather as Eugene himself was to become) and was sued by one woman for a child she claimed he abandoned.<sup>18</sup> This lawsuit and periodic demands for

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18 Gelb 2000.

money by this woman could not have contributed to the happiness of Eugene's mother, Mary Ellen Quinlan, who was a devoted Catholic and spent time in the convent. She had more education and higher social status than her husband (who grew up in poverty) and was, like Christine, a wife in a loveless marriage.

The O'Neills had three children. James was the oldest, but died at forty-five from alcoholism: his mother constantly blamed him for causing the death of Edmund (a second son) from measles, accusing him of infecting the baby. Mary Ellen was on tour with her husband when this happened, and she felt she had abandoned her baby; she also blamed her husband. Mary Ellen became addicted to morphine because of her loss and the difficult labor she endured giving birth to her youngest child, Eugene. Eugene himself felt guilty not only for his mother's addiction, but also for living instead of Edmund. This history of misery is all well documented in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (1941, first performed 1956).<sup>19</sup> In that play, daytime afforded the illusion of sanity; the night was where the Furies lurked. O'Neill lost his father in 1920, his mother in 1922, and his brother James in 1923; he had problems generated by affairs in his own life, with three marriages and abandoned children. At that point, he could and did claim he was the last of the O'Neills. If the Mannons shared the adulterous passions that seemed part of the family curses paralleling the house of Atreus, they also paralleled certain catastrophes in this playwright's life.

O'Neill's assessment of the wickedness of women that seemed to shape Christine in *Mourning Becomes Electra* might well have stemmed from his own mother. Yet all he could really blame her for was her addiction and her remoteness, not adultery. She was more sinned against than sinning. But the specter of suicide, that cardinal sin, also lingers throughout as a mark of wickedness and forecloses any chance of the "happy ending" Aeschylus allows a just murder to provide his characters. Christine commits suicide, after which Orin kills himself, and Lavinia commits symbolic suicide. But in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Orestes stabs his mother, takes over rule of the kingdom, and his sister marries his best friend, Pylades. The Mannons all fulfill O'Neill's death wish, and his feelings of guilt that through his own birth he had caused his mother's drug addiction.<sup>20</sup> His mother had had an unsuccessful suicide attempt (drowning); O'Neill took what he hoped was an overdose of Veronal, but was rushed to the hospital and saved; but his brother and sons succeeded in killing themselves, mainly through alcoholism.<sup>21</sup> Mourning, along with suicide, becomes the Mannons,

19 O'Neill 1988, 803.

20 Black 1999, 89–90.

21 Gelb 2000, 174, 329–33, 361–2.



and O'Neill's family. Throughout O'Neill's life, his most consistent love affair was with death.

O'Neill lived with perpetual guilt, and so his characters often share that. O'Neill shares many emotions with Orin; he said in some psychiatric notes that he hated his father; he also longed for his absent addicted mother. His older brother Jamie had taught him how to live a life of immediate self-gratification in both drinking and sex, while cheating their miserly father into funding their escapades. All this personal family history led to major changes from the *Oresteia* in the characters of the siblings. Orin tells his mother that it's fine, even if she killed her husband, since he would have helped her: "Mother! I won't pretend to you I'm sorry he's dead!"<sup>22</sup> He tells her: "No matter what you ever did, I love you better than anything in the world ... I could forgive anything—anything!"<sup>23</sup> His Oedipal devotion certainly is more modern than Sophoclean, since the classic Oedipus was horrified at the idea of marrying his mother. But another parallel with the *Oresteia* is that Orestes is jealous of his mother's lover: "The staging should make it clear that Orestes is particularly angered by Clytemnestra's concern for Aegisthus' body and her mourning over it. Orestes is jealous and angry when he sees his mother's concern for another man ..." <sup>24</sup> The *Orestes* and the *Electra* of Euripides make this even clearer.

Another difference from Aeschylus' *Oresteia* is that O'Neill concentrated on Electra, who became a *leitmotif*. Yet analogously with the curse of the house of Atreus, O'Neill himself is a combination of Orin and Electra, fixated on his mother, and yet feeling constantly rejected by her. O'Neill's Lavinia combines elements from all three versions of the Electra stories by the three main ancient Greek tragic playwrights. She is the pious Electra of the *Libation Bearers* who condemns her mother; she is the vindictive heroic Electra of Sophocles' version, who could well be imagined telling Orestes to "strike again, if you are strong enough."<sup>25</sup> But she is mainly Euripides' neurotic resentful Electra. O'Neill knew his classics well, and used them all. Christine is faithful to the original Clytemnestra in not feeling guilt for killing Ezra. Both Clytemnestras blamed their husbands. Perhaps the parallel to the sacrifice of Iphigenia lies in Mannon's taking Orin into the war against his mother's protest, with the result of Orin's being injured and his subsequent mental suffering. His Furies do not come exclusively from the murder of the mother, but from the war, not family, but nation (paralleling possibly the Greek excesses at Troy?).

<sup>22</sup> O'Neill 1988, 968.

<sup>23</sup> O'Neill 1988, 971.

<sup>24</sup> McDonald 2003, 17.

<sup>25</sup> McDonald and Walton 2004, 61.

The Aegisthus parallel in Adam Brant works through an affair that the Mannon grandfather, Abe, had with a servant in the house, Marie Brantôme, Adam's mother. Abe discovered that she was also his brother David's lover and that she was pregnant by him. He bought David's half of the family business from him, threw both Marie and David out of the house, and disowned David who became an alcoholic and let Marie support him. He ended up hanging himself when they descended into utter poverty. Marie tried to raise her son Adam well, but he ran off to sea, and only came back to find her dying of sickness and starvation. She even appealed to Ezra, who refused to help. When she died in Adam's arms, he swore vengeance. Ezra, after all, had virtually killed his mother.

At first, Adam only wanted revenge, but ultimately fell in love with Christine. It is she who is mainly to blame for Ezra's death since she made Adam buy her the poison. For him, sufficient vengeance would have been to have stolen Christine from Ezra. Adam only provided the poison that his lover Christine used, and then only because she wheedled, taunted, and insisted he buy it for her. The parallel to this story in the ancient myth is that Aegisthus was the son of Thyestes, the twin brother of Atreus, Agamemnon's father. Thyestes had seduced Atreus' wife to help him gain the throne of Mycenae. The gods favored Atreus' ruling Mycenae, and he banished Thyestes. Later, Atreus pretended to make up with Thyestes and invited him to a banquet—and served him his own sons for the meal. Aegisthus, Thyestes' son, was able to avenge his father by killing Agamemnon, and here (indirectly) parallels Adam Brant assisting Christine in murdering Ezra. In the *Oresteia*, there is a punishing force, *atê*, which can be a curse or scourge or misfortune that goes down generations. Today that could be comparable to certain conditions—say, genetic defects in some families, or the propensity to alcoholism or other diseases. The modern *atê* here seems to be rather suicide, whether successful or only attempted, as it shows in O'Neill's own life and in the end of the Mannon family: Orin's death and the self-entombment of Lavinia.

A major change by O'Neill is that Ezra Mannon is shown after the war to have changed from his former remoteness. He wants to make up for all his mistakes and tells Christine he has always loved her, but now he will work on making up for any coldness he showed over the years. This is very different from an Agamemnon who killed his child (Iphigenia) by Clytemnestra so he could win the war at Troy, and who brought a captive Trojan home as his concubine (Cassandra). Ezra's making a "man" of Orin was hardly the same as killing him. The returning Ezra is a sympathetic man who wants to work at winning back his wife's love, which makes her rejection of him all the more painful and

wicked. Gone are the dual justifications of Iphigenia and Cassandra and even, more abstractly, death as the comeuppance for Greek hubris at Troy.

In *Mourning Becomes Electra*, it is difficult not to see Christine as heartless, as she brutally announces her adultery to her husband, knowing his weak heart. When he has an attack and asks for his pills, she substitutes the poison. She also manipulates Orin for her own ends against Vinnie; she adds seductive promises just to keep him quiet so she can leave with Brant following her husband's death. It is difficult not to detect a latent misogyny in O'Neill, given the number of women he abandoned, including his own daughter, a misogyny possibly induced by that remote, bitter, and later addicted mother, and his being deprived of the nurturing love he felt he needed growing up. Misery, if you're a gifted playwright, can reap rewards.

Aeschylus is much more sympathetic to Clytemnestra. While O'Neill shows the woman, Christine, as a source of vindictive evil for imagined wrongs, his characterizations of Ezra and Brant are sympathetic. Aeschylus shows his heroes in a darker light: Agamemnon kills his daughter "putting on the yoke of necessity," so he could win a war, and Aegisthus at the end of the first play is a blustering coward and tyrant.

Another major change from Aeschylus is a condemnation of war by Orin, which again links him to O'Neill himself, but further distances him from the war hero, Aeschylus, and the military values of ancient Athens. O'Neill has clearly merged his own life here with the structure of the *Oresteia*. Orin confesses to his mother, "God, how I've dreamed of coming home! I thought it would never end, that we'd go on murdering and being murdered until no one was left alive!"<sup>26</sup> He said about the war-killing that it was "like murdering the same man over and over, and that in the end I would discover the man was myself! Their faces keep coming back in dreams—and they would change to father's face—or to mine."<sup>27</sup> He links the war with his own obsession, which seems to include killing his father, and, perhaps at the same time, himself. As he transforms into his father, he condemns the acts of the family—another reason for his own suicide to follow. One can win a war, but real and lasting peace is more elusive, particularly for Ezra and Orin. Another of O'Neill's insights was that our heritage is to become our parents at some point, sometimes imitating their worst traits. Orin becomes Ezra Mannon, Lavinia becomes Christine, even in their appearance (and many remarks in the play corroborate and emphasize this). The children eventually imitate the dress, speech, and

26 O'Neill 1988, 957.

27 O'Neill 1988, 977.

other characteristics of their parents. All the younger characters transform into avatars of the older ones, fulfilling for them what is a family curse.

Once again, Christian guilt, particularly with things sexual, shapes O'Neill's version of the *Oresteia*, which shows clearly a dialectic between O'Neill's own personal experiences and myth. The *Oresteia* features no tropical isle where people are guiltless about their sexuality, about which Ezra, Brant, Christine, Orin, and Lavinia all dream. They are punished as is O'Neill, who replicated his family curse (*atê*): abandoning long term relationships and alcoholism. His plays are both punishment and expiation.

### Herzog/Golder: The Furies Take Over

The inspiration for Herzog's film *My Son, My Son, What Have Ye Done* (2009) was Mark Yavorsky, a student at the University of California, San Diego, department of theatre; he was cast in a performance of the *Oresteia*, and one day, like Orestes, he killed his mother.<sup>28</sup> Herbert Golder, a professor at Boston University, brought the idea to Werner Herzog, and collaborated on the script; David Lynch agreed to produce the film. It is not a documentary of what happened; as Herzog claims in a discussion following the film, "I am not an accountant of facts, but a poet who invents a story."

The names of the real people have been changed: Brad McCallam becomes the film version of Yavorsky. Characters' names are revealed as the plot unfolds. There are five major characters: Michael Shannon who plays Brad; Grace Zabriskie as his mother; William Dafoe plays Detective Hank Havenhurst; Chloë Sevigny is Brad's girlfriend Ingrid and Udo Kier is Lee Meyers, the director of the *Oresteia*, who directs Brad as Orestes. There are many flashbacks and both time and space collapse, as they can in film. This film recounts how the murder of the mother of Brad McCallam developed after Brad was cast as Orestes. At the end, the murderer is arrested. His future is uncertain.

The film's title, *My Son, My Son What Have Ye Done*, reflective of the dying words of Yavorsky's mother after her son has run her through with a sword he used as a prop in rehearsals, is altered for the film to suggest Mrs. McCallam's religious upbringing of her son—the quotation derives from the biblical story of Absalom. The Herzog/Golder film—with its mad, globetrotting murderer—anticipates the irrational killers of our time (one thinks of James Holmes and Adam Lanza, who both shot their mothers in 2012), though the changes of locale in the film from Tijuana to China and Peru violate the traditional notion of

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28 <http://www.bu.edu/today/2010/a-murder-that-mimicked-greek-tragedy/>.

unity of location in Greek tragedy in a way that a staged play never could, and provide a dizzying frame to the killer's madness.

Many audiences might construe some of the characters as mad (including the main character), but madness in a Herzog film is never simple. His *Signs of Life* (1968) shows a German soldier suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. He threatens to blow up everyone when he takes over a munitions dump in Greece at the end of World War II. Instead of mass murder, the film shows him releasing man-made fireworks in a grand gesture of spectacular creativity. Herzog seems to show the drive of human beings to leave their mark on life by their creation, as he himself has done, even if madness is a significant trait in these characters.

Werner Herzog Stipetić himself grew up rather isolated in a Bavarian village in the mountains where he lived with his mother and brother. Survival for them was always a problem. He faced challenges, which he has taken up again and again in his films. If there was anything dangerous required, he would be the first to do it, before asking it of his actors. Although abandoned by his German father, Werner adopted his surname, Herzog. (Stipetić, a Croatian name, was his mother's). His grandfather on his father's side was an archeologist and responsible for deciphering many ancient inscriptions in Greece. For the most part, however, Herzog was self-educated, rejecting the way that schools, he felt, could render literature lifeless by uninspired interpretations. He taught himself film, totally rejecting the conventional "Hollywood" approaches of directors who, he believed, sold their souls for popularity. With his unconventional films, Herzog forces his audience to confront unconventional ideas.

O'Neill's long plays, which refuse to compromise, parallel Herzog's preference for long scenes and unsettling long takes. O'Neill was never "popular," but was known as America's only playwright to win the Nobel Prize. His interpretation of the *Oresteia*, with its lush and poetic text, is replaced in Herzog's film by the visual image (thanks to his excellent camera man, Peter Zeitlinger), and unconventional, but totally apt music that ranges from professional cello work by Ernst Reijseger to mariachis performing in Tijuana to popular Mexican ballads. Herzog narrates his film in flashbacks, rather like Aeschylus' flashbacks in his choruses. Then there are some trademark touches, pictures of animals staring, for instance, which enhance the motif of sight in the film (ostriches, and flamingos, and a rooster who attacks). Aeschylus also used eagles tearing apart a hare to symbolize the two leaders destroying Troy, and Clytemnestra dreams of a snake nursing at her breast (Orestes as source of her death). There are always dangerous animals in Herzog's films, unpredictable animal nature as a parallel to man's own nature.

Part of *My Son* was filmed in San Diego, but other parts in the same setting as *Aguirre, Wrath of God* (1972), the Peruvian jungle near Huayna Picchu, along the Urubamba River with its torrential rapids. Yavorsky himself had also gone to Pakistan and converted to Islam (which explains Brad's claiming Farouk as an alternate name), but Herzog decided that filming in Pakistan was too dangerous for his American cast. He chose instead to film in the Kashgar Market, along the Silk Road, where the local residents were mostly Muslim. Brad's neighbor, Mrs. Thomas, who witnessed the murder, observed that Brad had become different since he returned from both of these trips.

Flashbacks show the divine spirit seeming more and more to speak directly to him and God warning him not to go on to Peru's destructive falls. It was as if the sight of that torrential water baptized him, and gave him insight. It is also typical of Herzog that people interact with landscapes in a way that transforms them.<sup>29</sup> Herzog here captures many shots of people looking at Brad strangely, as if their space is invaded by him. There are also unconventional devices in the film that add to the idea of stopping time, and having the power to be at a center that is totally still; Brad describes this feeling: "I've found the still point, unwobbling pivot of the world."<sup>30</sup> Many times Herzog has his characters go still as they face the camera. This not only replicates Brad's perception, but the filmmaker's art—again, highlighting the metamorphosis of play into film. In these moments, we might sense the madness of Orestes or the curse on the house itself that is described so vividly in the choral odes of Aeschylus.

Herzog is entranced by the madness of everyday life and here shows the madness of police investigations—the way the police trip themselves up in attention to details: direction and inches of wound, the weapon and the blood—when they miss what was going on in the perpetrator's mind and soul. The police officer Havenhurst wonders at one point: "Sometimes I really don't know who's worse, us cops or the fucking criminals."<sup>31</sup> Madness in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* is induced by gods, and is clearly distinguished from sanity; Clytemnestra credits *atê*, the madness that blinded her reason and was sent by gods as part of the family curse to punish their family for killing Agamemnon, while Orestes is pushed first by Apollo and then haunted by the Furies. Both O'Neill and Herzog/Golder, on the other hand, blur the distinction between reason and insanity.

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29 As characters were transformed by their landscapes in *Aguirre, Wrath of God* (1972) and *Fitzcarraldo* (1982).

30 Herzog/Golder 2009, 49.

31 Herzog/Golder 2009, 3.

The women of Herzog's *My Son* are also altered from Aeschylus, whose Clytemnestra dominates the stage. A nice visual definition of Mrs. Macallam is the bottom lighting of her as she enters unannounced into her son's bedroom. Her head resembles a skull. That allows the audience to have a visual premonition of her death. She is no Clytemnestra, but her over-protectiveness of her son is rather smothering (as Herzog's cinematic wit emphasizes, Brad first tries to smother her with a pillow he buys that says, "Mother, not Maid"). Nevertheless, it would seem, superficially, that she wants the best for him, as he acknowledges. This is one reason he hands Miss Thomas, the neighbor, a baseball bat, on the fatal day, and asks her to kill him, "before it happens." When Miss Thomas hesitates, he takes out the antique sword his uncle had given him as a prop and kills his mother (offscreen; Herzog follows ancient Greek practice and refuses to deliver a gory cliché). Brad believes he may have killed his mother as a type of blessing, to relieve her of her suffering, as if God had revealed this to him. Brad asks Ingrid, his girlfriend who also plays Clytemnestra in the play, to twitch her feet as a sign that she was dancing off to heaven. He feels he is likewise liberating his mother into a type of paradise. In the house where he flees, Brad tells the police: "God is here, He's in the house with me! But I don't need Him anymore!"<sup>32</sup> He rolls out a Quaker Oats box, with a picture on it of what Brad calls a kind God. Later, he pushes out a boom box that plays "I was born to preach the gospel," which, at one point, Brad told Ingrid, was God singing. The ancient gods of Aeschylus, especially Apollo and Zeus, are replaced by the Abrahamic god.

Brad's hearing the word of God in *My Son* is comparable to Orestes' being commanded by Apollo to kill his mother. Brad is a good person who does not set out to be a matricide, until it seems he receives a command. Whether the command is just or not is another issue. Brad does good deeds at the VA hospital he visits with Ingrid, telling her that his father died there, and it is amusing that his wish to "visit the sick" at the veterans' hospital is later regarded as a potentially hostile act. He tries to distribute pillows for the sick, but one wonders if he means to relieve the patients of their pain, as he later did his mother, when he tried to smother her. Brad is, he feels, misunderstood in the modern world, and his good deeds are not appreciated.

There are many absurdist elements in the film: for example, the scene where the uncle discusses his idea for an ad: his giant chicken, Willard, chases a dwarf riding a small pony around a giant tree. After the uncle describes this to Brad, they stand beneath a dwarf on a hill, then suddenly freeze, and face the camera. It teaches the audience to think about size in different ways. And, then,

32 Herzog/Golder 2009, 18.

common animals become dangerous, not only chickens (which Herzog personally loathes), but the ostriches that the uncle breeds. At the end of the film, Brad asks to be remembered for his ostriches ("dinosaurs in drag"), not the flamingos he keeps as pets. Brad considers his flamingos, named MacNamara and MacDougal, eagles in drag, and keeps them as his hostages (which the police mistakenly think are people). One thinks of the omen at the beginning of the *Oresteia*, the two eagles slaughtering the hare, as symbolic of the leaders destroying Troy. There are several menacing analogies with birds in the film.

There are also, as might be expected, plays on sight and insight: Brad is obsessed with eyeglasses, and his glasses truly magnify light. Brad shows Ingrid the transformative colors of his glasses: "Razzle Dazzle," he announces. (One thinks of Charles Manson's favorite phrase, "Helter Skelter"; Manson considered himself a type of preacher). Brad tells Ingrid, "This is my way of bringing heaven to earth," or as the script suggests, "It looks as if a child had invented an enigmatic, celestial kaleidoscope."<sup>33</sup> The McCallum address is on Crystal Street, and Brad's mother tells him, "You're my Jewel of Crystal Street." To which he answers, "And you're my mother of the dark heart."<sup>34</sup> Possibly this indicates what he sees as her sorrow, from which he intends to liberate her. Again, the images of light and darkness are at the center of such "creativity." The glasses reinforce the sight theme, and in a way replicate the camera; we're aware of lenses also when we view Tijuana through a spotted windshield. Tears also blur Brad's vision, and he says he has cried since he was young, for instance, in a laundry room where a murder occurred. On an escalator, Brad discovers how, while walking down ascending stairs, he can freeze time. And just as scenes are frozen in the film by a photograph, a good deed can be frozen in its potentiality: near the end, someone even photographs a ball in the tree. These are visually poetic moments that are comparable to Aeschylus' poetry, emphasizing themes with images instead of words.

After he has killed his mother, Brad asks several times why everyone seems to be staring at his house. Then the scene changes to Peru, and he asks why the hills are staring at him. The same question emerges again when he is in the Kashgar market (which can be explained by his wearing a camera, although in the film it is invisible). Both the hippies in the earlier waterfall sequence who stared at Brad with misunderstanding and the Muslims in Kashgar who also wonder at him seem to be stand-ins for the Furies that drive Orestes mad.

Brad is obsessed with time and the insights it gives him. He calls his director Lee Meyers on the day he is to kill his mother: "Lee, everything is crystallizing

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33 Herzog/Golder 2009, 70.

34 Herzog/Golder 2009, 63.



into one word, 'Now.'" He has a conscious relationship with time. He races up to two hundred miles per hour in Coronado, saying: "I wanted to know how it felt being in *Star Wars* ... driving through the Valley of Death."<sup>35</sup> Alluding to both a modern (cinematic) bible as well as to the ancient one, Brad makes both the past and present, and life and death, converge in this image of speed. Aeschylus also collapses time and space by relocating Orestes' trial from Delphi to Athens in his *Eumenides*, and recounting both past and future in Cassandra's speech in the *Agamemnon*.

Brad, like Orin and Orestes, seems alone and isolated. Orestes' father was absent in his youth, and Orestes' mother sent him away for protection. Orin's father was away at war as was Orin himself. Brad says his father died when he was two, and there are real-life equivalents. Herzog's father absented himself—in his alcoholism and trips, O'Neill's father was equally absent. The cause of this aloneness seems to point to the mothers. Is there a latent or even at times overt misogyny in sons abandoned by their fathers? The Aeschylean choruses chosen for Herzog's film emphasize the guilt of the mother and the evil of women in general: "the daring and passion of women that stop at nothing" and "the cruel bitch of female passion."<sup>36</sup>

### Conclusion

How well has the *Oresteia* been served by its modern incarnations? Werner Herzog's visual imagery captures the poetry of Aeschylus, and also allows us to understand how every human being is a mixture of good and evil, and how such definitions must blur. There are no either-ors, but rather flux and flow, and every human being deserves understanding and compassion. O'Neill's text captures the poetry of the *Oresteia*, too, but not the compassion: he acquits neither the Mannons, nor himself. There is in both, however, a sense of limitation. This sense of limitation shows itself especially in the way the three poets depict their women. Christine, Brad's mother, and Ingrid are not as multifaceted as Clytemnestra. Aeschylus' queen remains unsurpassed in incarnating the complexity and majesty of a powerful woman. However, the male characters in the modern versions blaze in their passions and can be generous and sympathetic. These avatars of Aeschylus each reflect the particular genius of their modern creators, and the times and culture they lived in.

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35 Herzog/Golder 2009, 34.

36 Herzog/Golder 2009, 51–2.

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# The Overlooked οἰκονομία of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* and Stanley Kubrick’s *The Shining*

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## Introduction

Formidable barriers of time and place, language and culture separate Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* from Stanley Kubrick’s film *The Shining* (1980). Yet, the two works are so uncannily linked by shared elements and themes that a detailed comparison is mutually illuminating.<sup>1</sup> Each piece is a visually sumptuous work of horror, built around a haunted house. Each focuses on acts of savagery among kin, including the sacrificial murder of children. And each features a clairvoyant attuned to phantoms arising from an eerie commingling of past, present, and future. Moreover, both Aeschylus and Kubrick ground their violence in the corrupting effects of wealth,<sup>2</sup> which ripple across temporal and social divides. This transcendent nature of evil leads the directors to personify their potent locales: the palace of the Atreidae and the Overlook Hotel ultimately possess the individuals who inhabit and maintain them.

Both play and film begin by emphasizing the most important character in each: a physical structure. *Agamemnon*’s performance in 458 BCE opened with something new at center stage, namely the *skene*.<sup>3</sup> This simple wooden building

1 I do not argue here for the direct influence of Aeschylus on Kubrick, despite the latter’s reputation as a self-taught polymath interested in “archetypes of the unconscious” (quoted in LoBrutto 1997, 411). Diane Johnson, who co-wrote the screenplay with Kubrick, noted that he “ha[d] a strong literary sense” and “[thought] like a novelist.” Among the authors they discussed were Lovecraft, Bettelheim, and Freud. For details on the development of the script see LoBrutto 1997, 412–3. On *The Shining*’s relationship to “the Uncanny” and fairy tales see Hoile 1984.

2 On wealth, see also Seaford this volume.

3 On the likelihood that this was the first play to use the *skene* see Taplin 1979, 452–9. Seaford 2012, 337–9, argues by contrast that a *skene* was perhaps present in Aeschylus’ earlier *Persians* (472) and *Suppliant Women* (ca. 463), and in his *Seven Against Thebes* (467). The evidence is not conclusive; even if Seaford is correct, the structure remains an unobtrusive, underused, and inanimate backdrop in the plays prior to *Agamemnon*.

represented the house of the sons of Atreus; it was a tangible expression of identity and history, a marker of place and wealth. The poet's words, together with the imaginations of the audience, turned an unprepossessing wall, pierced by a single door<sup>4</sup> and covered by a primitive roof, into a palace. As Padel notes, "when Athenian theater began using the *skene*, Western tragedy acquired an inner chamber, a place of potent concealment, and a vital passageway to that interior, the channel which makes and unmakes the relationship between seen and unseen."<sup>5</sup> In *Agamemnon*, Aeschylus uses innovative dramaturgy to make the house of Atreus into a visible sign of persistent, yet initially invisible, evil.

*The Shining* begins in a similar way. As the opening credits roll, a long helicopter shot follows a car climbing a winding mountain road; as it rounds a bend, the Overlook Hotel heaves majestically into view. Kubrick had already begun his use of collage scores relying on "classical repertoire ... to activate a rich field of musical reference, allusion, and counterpoint."<sup>6</sup> Here, inspired by Berlioz' *Requiem*,<sup>7</sup> he uses a version of *Dies Irae* mixed with animal cries and Native American chants to create an ominous mood. The musically ignorant sense that the natural splendor of the mountain West and the opulent exterior of the hotel conceal something older and brooding, while those who recognize the auditory intertexts know that we have reached a time and a place of reckoning.<sup>8</sup> Stephen King, who wrote the original novel, envisioned the Overlook as "a huge storage battery charged with an evil powerful enough to corrupt all those who come in contact with it."<sup>9</sup> Kubrick's film captures this at the outset.

In Aeschylus' play, the watchman quickly draws our attention to the nature of the palace. Perched atop its roof,<sup>10</sup> he states that the house has fallen on troubled times, resorting to personification (36–9):

4 Based on *Libation Bearers* and Aristophanic comedy, Garvie 1986, xlvii–lii argues that the tragic *skene* generally had two doors. In *Agamemnon*, however, no stage action or textual evidence requires a second door.

5 1990, 354.

6 Kuperski 2012, 11. For instance, the Nietzschean intertext of Strauss' "Also Sprach Zarathustra" haunts *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968).

7 See LoBrutto 1997, 447–8.

8 Kuperski 2012, 143.

9 Duvall 1999, 36.

10 Thus Taplin 1977, 277.

... βοῦς ἐπὶ γλώσσηι μέγας  
 βέβηκεν. οἶκος δ' αὐτός, εἰ φθογγὴν λάβοι,  
 σαφέστατ' ἄν λέξειεν· ὥς ἐκὼν ἐγὼ  
 μαθοῦσιν αὐδῶ κοῦ μαθοῦσι λήθομαι.

... A great ox straddles my tongue. The house itself, if it should take voice, would speak most clearly. I speak willingly to those who know; to those who don't, I am dumb.<sup>11</sup>

As Goldhill notes, here “the house is raised to a position of knowledge beyond humans, a possible transcendent, lacking only a voice.”<sup>12</sup> We are entering a realm of secrets, where a house all but speaks and a human voice is choked.

After the long-awaited beacon appears, the chorus enters, recounting the coming of the Trojan war and the demand of Artemis. As Kalchas then foretold, even compliance would beget future discord (154–5): *μῖναι γὰρ φοβερὰ παλίνορτος, / οἰκονόμος δολῖα, μνάμων Μῆνις τεκνόποινος* (“for a frightful, fresh-arising, / house-administering, wily, remembering, child-avenging Rage awaits”). The adjective *οἰκονόμος* and the verb *μῖναι* bring to mind Clytemnestra, who administers (*νέμω*) the house (*οἶκος*) in the king's absence and is impatient for his return.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, *τεκνόποινος* (“child-avenging”) resembles and is metrically equivalent to *τεκνόποιος* (“child-making”).<sup>14</sup> And *Μῆνις*, understood as Clytemnestra's rage at the loss of Iphigenia, looks ahead to *μήτις*, the feminine wile with which she will fell her husband.<sup>15</sup> But the chorus' language simultaneously points to something more dangerous than the queen.<sup>16</sup> In his stage directions, Fagles has the chorus turn to face the palace as they utter these lines.<sup>17</sup> For “out of Agamemnon's offense arises an evil thing, long lasting, that makes its home in his house and ever renews its power, whose memory

11 Unless otherwise noted, the Greek text is that of West 1990. All translations are my own.

12 Goldhill 1984, 12.

13 See her ironic self-description at lines 606–10, and Agamemnon's address to her at line 914.

14 This latter, two-ending adjective appears elsewhere in tragedy and can be used of a wife. See LSJ s.v. The *Oresteia* demonstrates a continued interest in women's role in procreation at, e.g., *Eumenides* 657–66, 736–8.

15 See *Agamemnon* 222, 1426; *Libation Bearers* 626.

16 Despite the many accompanying adjectives, the precise nature of the “child-avenging Rage” remains ambiguous. Does the noun phrase denote a Curse? If so, whose? Or the Furies? If so, those of Iphigenia, or Thyestes, or his children? The chorus' unwillingness (or inability) to speak more precisely heightens the foreboding.

17 1966, 108.

never weakens.”<sup>18</sup> The question of who (or what) tends the palace comes to the fore when Clytemnestra makes her first appearance through the *skene* door at line 258. As Taplin notes, “the *threshold* demarks the frontier of the house ... the doorway in and out of the palace has an important place within the play. Cassandra sees these doors as “the gates of Hades” (1291). And the watchdog of the gates is Clytemnestra. She controls the threshold and everyone in *Agam[emnon]*, with the exception of Cassandra, uses the door on her terms and under her supervision.”<sup>19</sup> With the exception of the queen herself, those who enter never reemerge.

In describing her joy at Agamemnon's subsequent arrival, Clytemnestra employs several metaphors: he is a watchdog of farmsteads, a ship's forestay, a father's sole heir, land to the shipwrecked. Tellingly, she also calls him a ὑψηλῆς στήλης/ στῦλον ποδῆρης (“a foot-stretching column/ of the high roof,” 897–8). According to this figure, he is not the lofty head of the house, but just one of its many architectural membra, and a lowly one at that.<sup>20</sup> After Clytemnestra has entrapped and slain Agamemnon and Cassandra, she reemerges through the fateful door, confronting the chorus. At first she boasts the deed is hers (1379–80): ἔστηκα δ' ἔνθ' ἔπαισ' ἐπ' ἐξειργασμένοις./ οὕτω δ' ἔπραξα, καὶ τὰδ' οὐκ ἀρνήσομαι (“I stand where I struck, it's over and done:/ I did it and don't deny it”). But after mutual reproaches, she changes her tune, telling the chorus (1497–1502):

αὐχεῖς εἶναι τόδε τοῦργον ἐμόν·  
 μὴ δ' ἐπιλεχθῆις Ἀγαμεμνονίαν εἶναι μ' ἄλοχον·  
 φανταζόμενος δε γυναικὶ νεκροῦ  
 τοῦδ' ὁ παλαιὸς δριμύς ἀλάστωρ  
 Ἀτρέως χαλεποῦ θοινατῆρος  
 τόνδ' ἀπέτεισεν, τέλεον νεαροῖς ἐπιθύσας.

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You claim that this deed is mine: but do not think that I am Agamemnon's bedmate. Assuming the form of this corpse's wife, the ancient bitter

18 Fraenkel 1950, ii.93.

19 1978, 33. Seaford, 2012, 84–95, argues that the *skene* regularly represents a ritually contested threshold, where a newly arriving god confronts a resistant royal house (to the detriment of the latter).

20 According to Rose 1992, 205, “the royal house, as a physical object represented in the scene before the audience, is an ever-present symbol of all of the Atreidai which tends to efface individual differences between its occupants.”

avenger of Atreus, harsh banquet host, paid him back, a fit sacrifice for the young.

Daube regards Clytemnestra's apparent change of heart as a belated attempt to evade responsibility and escape punishment.<sup>21</sup> But the participle φανταζόμενος (1499) brings to mind the phantoms that the chorus themselves said ruled the palace in the days after Helen's departure for Troy.<sup>22</sup> And the noun phrase ὁ παλαιὸς δριμύς ἀλάστωρ points in an ancient and preternatural direction to a "spirit of destruction, spirit of vengeance, evil spirit."<sup>23</sup> The queen's words here are no mere sophism:

Clytemnestra has moved far away from her deed, which does not seem to belong to her own self any longer ... she does not mention, as so often elsewhere, vengeance for Iphigenia but atonement for the deed perpetrated by Atreus against the children of Thyestes. That is really Aegisthus' justification, not her own. For the moment she feels herself to be a mere tool of something not herself which has overpowered her.<sup>24</sup>

At line 1569–73, Clytemnestra expresses her willingness to make peace with the palace's resident evil:

... ἐγὼ δ' οὖν  
 ἐθέλω δαίμονι τῷ Πλεισθениδᾶν ὅρκους θεμένη  
 τάδε μὲν στέργειν, δύσκλητά περ ὄνθ',  
 ὃ δὲ λοιπόν, ἰόντ' ἐκ τῶνδε δόμων  
 ἄλλην γενεὰν τρίβειν θανάτοιο ἀυθέντησιν.

... And so I am willing to make a sworn covenant with the *daimon* of the Pleisthenids to accept [what's done], though it is hard to bear, if hereafter [the *daimon*] departs this house and wears out another family with kindred bloodshed.

21 Daube 1938, 189.

22 See lines 415, φάσμα ("apparition") and 420–21, ὄνειρόφαντοι ... πενθήμονες ... δόξαι ("dream-like, mournful fancies"). Wohl 1998, 95 notes that in the stasimon "not only are Menelaus and Paris merged, but also Menelaus and Helen. The subject and object become indistinguishable; they both become *phasmata*."

23 Fraenkel 1950, iii.711.

24 Fraenkel 1950, iii.711–2.



The tendency of the Overlook Hotel to possess its inhabitants and make them kill their relatives is likewise pronounced. When Jack Torrance arrives to interview for the position of winter caretaker, the general manager Mr. Ullman delicately fills him in on the exploits of a predecessor in the post. Ostensibly a victim of cabin fever, Charles Grady went mad, killing his young daughters and wife with an axe before committing suicide. Although Jack avers that such a thing could never happen to him, the film reveals his increasing identification with the hotel at the expense of his family. Shortly after they move into the hotel, his son Danny comes to him troubled by visions of the dead Grady girls:<sup>25</sup>

- Danny: Do you like this hotel?  
 Jack: Yes I do, I love it. Don't you?  
 Danny: I guess so.  
 Jack: Good. I want you to like it here. I wish we could stay here forever and ever ... ever.  
 Danny: Dad?  
 Jack: What?  
 Danny: You wouldn't ever hurt Mommy and me, would you?  
 Jack: What do you mean? Did your mother ever say that to you? That I would hurt you?  
 Danny: No, Dad.  
 Jack: Are you sure?  
 Danny: Yes, Dad.  
 Jack: I love you, Danny. I love you more than anything else in the whole world, and I'd never do anything to hurt you, never. You know that, don't you, huh?  
 Danny: Yes, Dad.  
 Jack: Good.

This conversation lays bare the family's existing fissures. As we know from an earlier scene, Jack has in fact hurt Danny in the past, dislocating his shoulder in a drunken rage. And his wife Wendy has never forgotten it. Moreover, the terms Jack intends as categorical reassurance ("never ... never") are unsettling. Echoing his earlier language ("forever and ever ... ever"), they mimic the speech of the murdered Grady girls, who constitute an object lesson in parental disaffection.<sup>26</sup> Danny himself is also skeptical, with his facial expressions belying

25 Quotations from the film are drawn from the transcript available at <http://www.daily-script.com>.

26 Kilker 2006, 59.

his dutiful responses. Above all, the father-son heart-to-heart underlines the divergence between the family's interests and those of the hotel. By asking his father whether he likes it here when he himself clearly does not, Danny limns the choice that confronts Jack with increasing urgency. And both he and we sense which way Jack is leaning.

Not long afterwards, Danny appears speechless with bruises on his neck; Wendy accuses Jack of resuming his abuse. Stunned, on the wagon, and desperate for a drink, he heads down to the Gold Room, where he meets a bespectacled bartender named Lloyd. While complaining about his domestic woes, Jack receives several free drinks. Wendy soon rushes in and says that Danny's injuries came when he visited Room 237, where a mysterious woman is hiding in the bathtub. Jack goes to investigate and encounters a beautiful young woman. She emerges naked from the tub and approaches him; as they embrace, Jack discovers (via a mirror) that she is a corpse from behind.<sup>27</sup> As he recoils in horror, she pursues him, aging and rotting before his eyes. After fleeing the room, Jack encounters Wendy and promptly lies. According to him, Room 237 proved empty: the only possible explanation for Danny's wounds is that he harmed himself. Wendy reluctantly agrees, but when she draws the related inference that they should immediately seek help for their son, Jack is flabbergasted: "You mean just leave the hotel?" When she insists, he becomes enraged. He is caught between the Overlook and his family, with his loyalties increasingly evident.

Jack then heads back to the bar and resumes his banter with Lloyd. When he tries to pay for his drinks, however, the barkeep refuses:

- Lloyd: Your money's no good here. Orders from the house.  
 Jack: Orders from the house.  
 Lloyd: Drink up, Mr. Torrance.  
 Jack: I'm the kind of man likes to know who's buying their drinks, Lloyd.  
 Lloyd: It's not a matter that concerns you, Mr. Torrance—at least not at this point.  
 Jack: Anything you say, Lloyd. Anything you say.

In accepting the largesse of the Overlook, Jack has begun to run a very different sort of tab.

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27 The repeated appearance of the dead girls outside Room 237, and the subsequent blurring of the boundaries between Jack and their butler father, suggests that the woman may be the murdered Mrs. Grady. See below, 535.

As he rises from the bar and makes his way through the ballroom (now filled with ghostly guests), Jack bumps into a butler who spills Advocaat on him. Although Jack's attire is workaday, the butler rushes him into the bathroom to clean off his jacket. As the butler works, Jack asks him his name, and learns that it is Delbert Grady. Jack then claims to recognize him as the former caretaker who killed his family and himself.<sup>28</sup> Grady however denies it:

- Grady: I'm sorry to differ with you, sir, but you are the caretaker. You have always been the caretaker. I should know, sir. I've always been here. Did you know, Mr. Torrance, that your son ... is attempting to bring an outside party into this situation? Did you know that?
- Jack: No.
- Grady: He is, Mr. Torrance.
- Jack: Who?
- Grady: A nigger.
- Jack: A nigger!
- Grady: A nigger cook.
- Jack: How?
- Grady: Your son has a very great talent. I don't think you are aware how great it is, but he is attempting to use that very talent against your will.
- Jack: Well, he is a very willful boy.
- Grady: Indeed he is, Mr. Torrance. A very willful boy. A rather naughty boy, if I may be so bold, sir.
- Jack: It's his mother. She eh ... interferes.
- Grady: Perhaps they need a good talking-to, if you don't mind my saying. Perhaps a bit more. My girls, sir, they didn't care for the Overlook at first. One of them actually stole a packet of matches and tried to burn it down. But I corrected them, sir. And when my wife tried to prevent me from doing my duty I corrected her.

<sup>28</sup> Mr. Ullman originally identified the caretaker as "Charles Grady," not "Delbert." The director's notorious attention to performance detail (see Kagan 2003, 205–8) suggests the discrepancy is likely intentional. Kuperski 2012, 7 observes that "the mysterious or enigmatic aspect of Kubrick's films derives from a certain obliqueness of presentation and a corresponding trust in the ability of mass audiences to experience and accept ambiguity."

Kuperski sees here “a colloquy of the imposing allegorical figure of duty and the cowering allegorical figure of abjection ... a provocative conversation between a servant in black tie and tails and a former schoolteacher and failed writer who dreams of the privileges once accorded to wealth, whiteness, and masculinity.”<sup>29</sup> And Jack identifies ever more fully with the hotel and all that it stands for, at the expense of his wife and child. The hotel has taken charge of its caretaker; Grady’s ministrations reveal the true damage done by the house’s “free” liquor.

When Jack returns from the bar, he confronts Wendy about Danny, sarcastically confirming that she wants to leave the hotel and take him to a doctor:

Jack: And you are concerned about him?

Wendy: Yes.

Jack: And are you concerned about me?

Wendy: Of course I am.

Jack: Of course you are. Have you ever thought about my responsibilities?

Wendy: Oh Jack, what are you talking about?

Jack: Have you ever had a single moment’s thought about my responsibilities? Have you ever thought for a single solitary moment about my responsibilities to my employers? Has it ever occurred to you that I have agreed to look after the Overlook Hotel until May the first? Does it matter to you at all that the owners have placed their complete confidence and trust in me, and that I have signed a letter of agreement, a contract, in which I have accepted that responsibility? Do you have the slightest idea what a moral and ethical principle is? Do you? Has it ever occurred to you what would happen to my future, if I were to fail to live up to my responsibilities? Has it?

Jack’s tirade shows that he completely sides with the Overlook and its owners. His willingness to sacrifice his son’s health to his job is sweepingly expressed in formal diction (“May the first,” “if I were to fail”) and couched in legalisms (“complete confidence and trust,” “letter of agreement”).

In preferring the claims of duty, Jack resembles Aeschylus’ Agamemnon deciding the fate of Iphigenia. According to the chorus, the king framed the issue thus (206–11):

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29 Kuperski, 2012, 38.

βαρεῖα μὲν κῆρ τὸ μὴ πιθέσθαι,  
 βαρεῖα δ' εἰ τέκνον δαίξω, δόμων ἄγαλμα,  
 μαιίνων παρθενοσφάγοισιν  
 ῥεῖθροις πατρώιους χέρας  
 πέλας βωμοῦ· τί τῶνδ' ἄνευ κακῶν;

It is a heavy fate not to obey [Artemis], but heavy also if I slaughter a child, the jewel of my house, polluting my fatherly hands with streams of maiden blood near the altar. Which of these is without evil?

Scholars have noted that the following lines (212–3) are crucial to his decision: πῶς λιπόνους γένωμαι/ ξυμμαχίας ἀμαρτῶν; (“How could I desert ship/ and abandon the alliance?”). This sentence contains two crucial terms, λιπόνους and ξυμμαχία. The first of these, while a *hapax*, has a strong legal flavor, and apparently denotes someone who abandons the fleet in wartime and runs away.<sup>30</sup> The second means “alliance,” and has political and military dimensions. According to Fraenkel, it here refers to “the relation (with reference to rights and duties) in which a σύμμαχος stands to his fellows.”<sup>31</sup> Put differently, Agamemnon worries that if he does not sacrifice his daughter, he will be neglecting obligations that he freely undertook and that attend his position as king.<sup>32</sup> By framing his dilemma in these words, Agamemnon has in essence already made his choice: “the future indicative in [εἰ τέκνον δαίξω] is not parallel to the weak deliberative subjunctive of [πῶς λιπόνους γένωμαι].”<sup>33</sup> The king even justifies his decision, embracing it as a lawful act (213–7):

30 According to LSJ s.v., the noun is equivalent to λιπόνεως, which occurs at Demosthenes 50.65. See further Daube 1938, 170, who links it to λιπναύτιον, which occurs at Lysias 1.5 and “ist (später?) technisch für das unbefugte Verlassen der Kriegsschiffe” (“is (later?) technical [terminology] for the unauthorized absence from warships”). On the problems caused by naval desertion during the Sicilian expedition, see Thucydides 7.13.2 and Hornblower 1980, 563–4.

31 1950, ii.123.

32 The terms λιπόνους and ξυμμαχία would have had a particular resonance in the Theater of Dionysus in 458. Athens was in the midst of transforming the Greek alliance against Persia into the Delian League, and as *hegemon* had become increasingly heavy-handed towards those cities that sought to renege on their promised contributions of men, ships, and money. See Meiggs 1972, 70–1, 90, and Kennedy 2009, 31–5.

33 Nussbaum 1986, 35.

παυσανέμου γὰρ θυσίας  
 παρθενίου θ' αἵματος ὀρ-  
 γᾶι περιόργως ἐπιθυ-  
 μεῖν<sup>34</sup> θέμις. εὖ γὰρ εἴη.

It is right to desire, with excess of passion, a wind-stopping sacrifice and a maiden's blood. May all be well.

As Nussbaum notes, "from the acknowledgment that a heavy doom awaits him either way, and that either alternative involves wrongdoing, [Agamemnon] has moved to a peculiar optimism: if he has chosen the *better* course, all may yet turn out well. An act that we were prepared to view as the lesser of two hideous wrongs and impieties has now become for him pious and right."<sup>35</sup>

In the course of their argument on the stairs to the Colorado Lounge, Wendy answers Jack's overt threats by striking him with a baseball bat and knocking him out. She then locks him into a kitchen pantry, barely escaping as he comes to. After a brief interval, Jack hears a knocking and converses with an unseen presence on the other side of the door:

- Grady: It's Grady, Mr. Torrance. Delbert Grady.  
 Jack: Grady ... oh. Oh Grady ... right. Grady ... er. Hullo Grady.  
 Grady: Mr. Torrance, I see you can hardly have taken care of the ... business we discussed.  
 Jack: No need to rub it in, Mr. Grady. I'll deal with that situation as soon as I get out of here.  
 Grady: Will you indeed, Mr. Torrance? I wonder. I have my doubts. I and others have come to believe ... that your heart is not in this, that you haven't the belly for it.  
 Jack: Just give me one more chance to prove it, Mr. Grady. That's all I ask.  
 Grady: Your wife appears to be stronger than we imagined, Mr. Torrance. Somewhat more resourceful, she seems to have got the better of you.  
 Jack: For the moment, Mr. Grady. Only for the moment.

34 The text is that of Fraenkel 1950, i.102, defended by him at ii.124–5. See further Nussbaum 1986, 431 n. 36.

35 1986, 35.

- Grady: I fear that you will have to deal with this matter in the harshest possible way, Mr. Torrance. I fear that is the only thing to do.
- Jack: There's nothing I look forward to with greater pleasure, Mr. Grady.
- Grady: You give your word on that, do you, Mr. Torrance?
- Jack: I give you my word.

We then hear the sound of the pin being drawn out and the bolt shot back: Jack has earned his freedom with a solemn promise to fulfill his duty to the house by killing his family. Meanwhile upstairs, Danny struggles to wake the exhausted Wendy, repeatedly writing and shrieking, "REDRUM." Jack's newfound resolution likewise resembles Agamemnon's conduct. As the chorus puts it (218–26):

ἐπεὶ δ' ἀνάγκας ἔδω λείπαδνον  
 φρενὸς πνέων δυσσεβῇ τροπαίαν  
 ἀναγνον ἀνίερων, τόθεν  
 τὸ παντότολμον φρονεῖν μετέγνων.  
 βροτοὺς θρασύνει γὰρ αἰσχρομήτις  
 τάλαινα παρακοπὰ πρωτοπήμων· ἔτλα δ' οὔν  
 θυτῆρ γενέσθαι  
 θυγατρός ...

After he donned the harness of necessity, breathing the impure, unholy turning of his mind, he decided that nothing was off-limits. For shameless, mad cunning emboldens mortals, and is the first cause of pain. Thus he dared to become his daughter's sacrificer.

Agamemnon's dedication to his task leads him to have Iphigenia gagged like an animal, and blinds him to her piteous glances as he wields the knife.

*Agamemnon* and *The Shining* are also alike in their depiction of the evil haunting their houses. In an interview about the screenplay conducted in 1977, Kubrick's co-author Johnson noted that there are two traditional types of ghosts, namely "real" ones with corporeal capabilities and "imaginative projections" arising from crazed individuals.<sup>36</sup> But she also floated a third possibility, namely spirits springing from "the psychological states of the characters," yet possessed of actual physical powers.<sup>37</sup> And she hinted that Kubrick had gone

36 Quoted by Kagan 2003, 204.

37 Quoted by Kagan 2003, 204.

into *The Shining* uncertain about which type its ghosts belonged to.<sup>38</sup> This ambiguity helps explain our difficulty in grasping the nature of the Overlook's ghosts. Take Lloyd and Grady, for instance. Are they real ghosts with material powers (perhaps projected by the house), or figments of Jack's imagination? According to Mr. Ullman, all the alcohol had been removed from the hotel for the winter. Thus, when Jack first contemplates the empty bar, he unwittingly proposes a Faustian bargain: "God, I'd give anything for a drink. My goddam soul, just a glass of beer." And when he looks up, Lloyd is standing there ready with the bourbon. Grady too possesses a corporeality, bumping into Jack and later springing him from the pantry. Yet in their conversation in the bathroom, Grady says it is Jack who has always been the caretaker at the Overlook. If so, what does that make Grady? Moreover, events without visible cause occur at crucial plot junctures. For instance, Danny's exploration of Room 237 is prompted by a mysterious tennis ball that rolls up to him on the carpet. Upon reaching the previously locked door, he finds it curiously ajar, key dangling from the lock. A significant amount of *The Shining's* horror derives from our disorientation: is the Overlook actually haunted, or are we seeing it through the eyes of the insane and the possessed? Danny's ability to "shine" is crucial to answering the question, for he more than anyone else is attuned to the supernatural. He is the first to see the images of the slaughtered Grady girls, and to sense the impending murders.

Kubrick's approach to the supernatural resembles Aeschylus'. The initial foreboding in *Agamemnon* deepens as the play proceeds. The watchman's joy is quickly occluded; the fires of thanksgiving that blaze up do not still the chorus' φροντίδ' ἀπληστον/ καὶ θυμοβόρον φρενὶ λύπην ("restless thought/ and grief that eats away at heart and mind," 102–3). The king's triumphant return only heightens the fear that displaces their reason and presides over their καρδίας τερασκόπου ("heart prone to portents," 977). But the truest of *Agamemnon's* seers is Cassandra. Brought to Mycenae as a captive, she needs no introduction to the palace. At line 1087, revulsion leads her to ask a rhetorical question: πρὸς ποῖαν στέγην; ("to what sort of roof (i.e., place) [have I come]?"). The chorus responds obtusely: she stands before the ancestral home of the Atreidai.

38 Kagan 2003, 204: "his decision about which of the three kinds of apparitions would be used was not made at the start, but Johnson said it would be clear in the end." By contrast, Kubrick said that King's novel "seemed to strike an extraordinary balance between the psychological and the supernatural in such a way as to lead you to think that the supernatural would eventually be explained by the psychological." (Quoted in LoBrutto 1997, 411).



Cassandra of course intends something far deeper with the adjective ποίαν, for she senses the history of the place (1090–2):

... μισόθεον μὲν οὖν, πολλὰ συνίστορα  
αὐτοφόνα κακὰ †κ'αρτάναι†  
ἀνδροσφαγεῖον καὶ †πεδορραντήριον†.

... it is god-hating, a conspirator with much evil blood on its hands †† a meat factory of men †streaming gore†.

The best translation of ἀνδροσφαγεῖον here is “Menschenschlachthaus.”<sup>39</sup> And the crux πεδορραντήριον seems a horrible perversion of *perirranterion*, the lustral basin whose sprinklings purified people to enter sacred spaces.<sup>40</sup> But while sacrifices and sprinklings elsewhere achieve their object, the perversions practiced here defile.<sup>41</sup> Cassandra's vision is monstrously akin to Danny's repeated glimpses of the elevator doors at the Overlook, from which issue great torrents of blood that engulf him.<sup>42</sup>

In what follows, Cassandra cryptically prophesies Agamemnon's death and her own. But eventually she foreswears enigmatic speech, describing her vision in language accessible to chorus and audience alike (1186–92):

τὴν γὰρ στέγην τήνδ' οὐ ποτ' ἐκλείπει χορός  
ξύμφθογγος οὐκ εὐφωνος· οὐ γὰρ εὖ λέγει.  
καὶ μὴν πεπωκώς γ', ὥς θρασύνεσθαι πλέον,  
βρότειον αἶμα κῶμος ἐν δόμοις μένει,  
δύσπεμπτος ἔξω, ξυγγόνων Ἑρινύων·  
ὑμνοῦσι δ' ὕμνον δώμασιν προσήμεναι  
πρώταρχον ἄτην ...

For a cacophonous chorus with single voice never leaves this roof. It speaks fell things. Indeed, a band of revelers, familial Furies, having drunk human blood to become bolder yet, occupies the halls, hard to dismiss. Sitting atop the house, they sing their song of primeval folly.

39 Fraenkel 1950, iii.495.

40 On the function of *perirranteria* see Cole 2004, 44–6.

41 On the perversion of ritual as a dominant motif throughout the *Oresteia*, see Zeitlin 1965.

42 The correspondence with the crimson cloths used by Clytemnestra is striking. See below, 545.

Cassandra's didactic turn is accompanied by a switch to iambic trimeter, and meant to convince the chorus of her sanity and prophetic knowledge. But it also marks the beginning of a process by which the *Agamemnon's* ghosts become increasingly visible to others: "Here the poet, with magnificent simplicity, has erected one of the supporting pillars of his great edifice. In this passage the choir of the Erinyes makes its entry into the trilogy, which it is to dominate until the end. The tale of the monsters who, surfeited with the blood of their victims, chant their sinister song looks forward to the choruses of the *Eumenides*."<sup>43</sup> And it is not just the Furies who take shape as matters progress. At the start of *Libation Bearers*, Electra, Orestes, and the chorus sing an elaborate *kommos* that is part dirge and part conjuration: "uncertainty as to whether [Agamemnon] would rise from the tomb may have contributed to the audience's suspense."<sup>44</sup> Towards the end of the play, after Orestes has killed Clytemnestra, he sees the Furies crowding in on him like Gorgons (1048) and winged hounds (1054), but they remain invisible to the chorus, who ask (1051–2) τίνες σε δόξαι ... / στροβοῦσιν; ("What imaginings whirl you?"). As Garvie notes, "for the audience a genuine doubt has been raised as to [the Furies'] objective existence."<sup>45</sup> *Eumenides* heightens the suspense still further, when the Pythia crawls from Apollo's sanctuary and describes the creatures lurking within (lines 34–59).<sup>46</sup> Only at line 140 do the Furies begin to appear in monstrous, irrefutable form. And the extraordinary nature of their entrance (σποράδην, "scattered")<sup>47</sup> through the *skene* door, combined with their ghastly looks, created a *frisson* of terror in the audience. Ghosts but dimly sensed in the *Agamemnon*, they have become so real that they are reported to have frightened members of the audience to death.<sup>48</sup>

We see a similar progression in *The Shining*, whose phantoms become increasingly visible to all. After Jack's attempt to kill Wendy is interrupted by the unexpected arrival of Halloran, she makes her way through the corridors of the Overlook. Cobwebs and corpses abound; bestial ghosts appear through an open doorway; a ghoulish party occupies the ballroom. The Overlook's

43 Fraenkel 1950, iii.543.

44 Garvie 1986, 122. *Persians*, performed in 472, contained a similar scene that led to the appearance of Darius' ghost above his tomb at line 681.

45 1986, 318.

46 It is also not certain whether the ghost of Clytemnestra was visible at lines 94–116: Sommerstein 1989, 100–1 offers a succinct discussion.

47 Taplin 1977, 371–2.

48 According to the anonymous *Life of Aeschylus* 10–3, the Furies' emergence caused infants to perish and pregnant women to miscarry.

perennial guests are truly a κῶμος .../ δῶσπεμπος ἔξω: while Wendy and Danny flee, they alone remain, with the wounded Halloran and the deranged Jack about to join their ranks.<sup>49</sup>

Both Aeschylus and Kubrick effectively use props to represent the blending of past and present, of seen and unseen. In the former, the “carpet” scene and its crimson cloths famously provide the linchpin for the entire *Agamemnon*.<sup>50</sup> As Taplin observes, “what connects this stage action with the past—and later with the future—is the theme and imagery of impious trampling underfoot which has already been established in the choral song ... and is continued throughout the trilogy.”<sup>51</sup> The tableau with which *The Shining* ends is equally significant. After Jack has failed to catch Danny and perished outdoors in the snowy maze, his frozen rictus slowly dissolves into a photograph hanging on the wall inside the hotel. Captioned “Overlook Hotel July 4th Ball 1921,” it depicts a crowd of happy partygoers in fancy dress gathered in the Gold Room. Grouped in a rough semicircle, they smile at the camera: at their center is a waiter in black tie. As the camera zooms in, he proves to be none other than Jack Torrance, sporting a grin recalling both his immortal “Here’s Johnny” moment and his deathmask. Jack’s service to the Overlook in life and death is paradoxically framed as an eternal Day of Independence.<sup>52</sup>

No comparison of *Agamemnon* and *The Shining* would be complete without reference to their shared approach to what is arguably their most important focus: the nature of evil. In the over-determined case of Aeschylus’ play, many causes combine to fill the palace of the Atreidae with blood. The adultery and power-grab of Thyestes, the ghoulish repast furnished by Atreus, the sacrifice of Iphigenia, and Greek sacrilege at Troy all contribute to the deaths of Agamemnon and Cassandra. *The Shining* likewise suggests overlapping explanations for Jack’s rampage at the Overlook, ranging from the vices of the hotel’s previous guests and the crimes of Grady to Jack’s alcoholism, frustrated writerly ambition, and failing marriage. In both pieces, the workings of a misogynistic

49 Kilker 2006, 61 claims that the fact that Halloran is Jack’s only victim is “due to a mixture of racist and sexist anxieties that plague Hollywood cinema and American society more generally.”

50 See e.g., Crane 1993, 117.

51 1977, 311. Lebeck 1971, 76 likewise claims that “we see Agamemnon committing an act which subsumes the particular wrongs of his past.”

52 According to Kuperski 2012, 8, Kubrick’s “symbolic tableaux act to conclude or compress the films’ themes and narrative in a mute, inviting way, ranging from moral certitude to comic nightmare or enigmatic promise. Such symbolic scenes act like still points in the interrupted flows of narrative, still points that concentrate the picture language of Kubrick’s cinema in a moment outside of time.”

patriarchy also play their part.<sup>53</sup> But the ultimate source of evil turns out to be wealth and its inherently corrupting effects.<sup>54</sup> *Agamemnon*'s chorus continually inveighs against the dangers of prosperity, claiming that they themselves reject both servile captivity and riches born from conquest (471–4):

κρίνω δ' ἄφθονον ὄλβον·  
μήτ' εἶην πτολιπόρθης,  
μήτ' οὖν αὐτὸς ἀλοὺς ὑπ' ἄλ-  
λων βίον κατίδοιμι.

I prefer unenvied prosperity. May I neither be a sacker of cities, nor a captive beholding life at the mercy of others.

Here the μήτ' ... μήτ' construction suggests that ἄφθονος ὄλβος constitutes a middle way, a prosperity not so great as to inspire envy.<sup>55</sup> According to Fraenkel, however, "in general usage [the adjective] had long acquired the sense of 'abundant,' and in association with a word like ὄλβος this meaning was almost bound to suggest itself to an ancient audience."<sup>56</sup> So what initially seems a compromise bleeds into the familiar dichotomy of expropriated wealth or plundered poverty. Moreover, the allusions to military activity would have struck home with the Athenian spectators. Many of them doubtless recalled the Persian invasion a generation earlier, which had brought the prospect of life ἀλοὺς ὑπ' ἄλλων near indeed. Debris from the sack of 480 was still visible on the Acropolis just to their rear.<sup>57</sup> In subsequent years even more of them had embarked on Athenian triremes for the Delian League's expeditions against Naxos, Carystus and Thasos. If the losses recorded on the Erechtheid casualty list (*IG* 1<sup>3</sup> 1147) are any indication, as many as 3% of the tribe's male citizens may have perished attempting to become πτολιπόρθεις in another series

53 For *The Shining*, see Kilker 2006.

54 Seaford, 2004 discusses the relationship of tragedy to money in general, observing (308) that in tragic plays "the tyrant typically values the power of money above the sacredness of cult and the ties of reciprocity and even of kinship and indeed is prepared to violate them all for the sake of this power."

55 On this sense of the adjective see LSJ s.v. I.

56 1950, ii.237.

57 See Hurwit 1999, 141: "it took time, even decades, to bury all of the *Perserschutt*, and some pieces (such as the Moschophoros ... and the head of Athena from the Gigantomachy pediment) ... would even be buried with classical material. Moreover, some works that were on the Acropolis when the Persians came were never buried at all."

of campaigns just a year or two prior to *Agamemnon*'s production.<sup>58</sup> In life as in art, there was apparently no middle ground between conquest and captivity, and the corresponding plenty and penury.

Later in the play, shortly before Agamemnon's arrival, the chorus quotes and comments on a proverb admitting of similar application (750–6):

παλαίφατος δ' ἐν βροτοῖς γέρων λόγος τέτυκται,  
μέγαν τελεσθέντα φωτὸς ὄλβον  
τεκνοῦσθαι μὴδ' ἄπαιδα θνᾶισκειν,  
ἐκ δ' ἀγαθᾶς τύχας γένει  
βλαστάνειν ἀκόρεστον οἰζύν.

There's an oft-repeated story fashioned long ago, that a man's great prosperity, when it matures, breeds and does not die childless; from a family's good fortune insatiable misery shoots forth.

"The most striking feature of the passage ... is that it does *not* dismiss wealth as a decisive component in crime. Rather, ... wealth is reaffirmed as the most relevant contributory factor."<sup>59</sup> The effect of the participle τελεσθέντα, and the infinitives τεκνοῦσθαι and θνᾶισκειν, is to turn prosperity into a living creature that, like the famous lion cub (λέοντος ἴνιν, 717–8), fills the house with blood (αἵματι δ' οἶκος ἐφύρθη, 732) when it comes of age (χρονισθείς, 727); misery (οἰζύς) is its direct descendant.<sup>60</sup> For Aeschylus, the very notion of good fortune, ἀγαθὴ τύχη, regularly invoked in oaths and decrees of the assembly,<sup>61</sup> proves oxymoronic. We have already noted that *Agamemnon*'s crimson cloth represents the transgenerational transgressions of the house of Atreus. But the play simultaneously weaves those same fibers into a sign of inexhaustible riches.<sup>62</sup> In urging her husband to tread the purple pathway, Clytemnestra pointedly remarks that πένεσθαι δ' οὐκ ἐπίσταται δόμος ("the house does not know how to be poor," 962). His acquiescence is thus "the visual and verbal climax of symbolic

58 On the date of the inscription see Meiggs and Lewis 1988, 75. For the population calculation, see Bakewell 2007, 127.

59 Rose 1992, 208–9.

60 On the general applicability of the parable, see Knox 1952. On the similarity of the two passages, see Fraenkel 1950, ii.348.

61 The earliest extant official use of the phrase at Athens is in line 40 of IG I<sup>3</sup> 40, a decree providing regulations for Chalcis. On the dating of the inscription to 446/5 see Meiggs and Lewis 1988, 143–4.

62 See Lee 2004, 254–5.

corruption,” and his “decision to waste wealth ... a natural if not inevitable function of the possession of vast wealth.”<sup>63</sup>

Kubrick's *Overlook Hotel* rests atop a similar economic foundation. Early in the film, Mr. Ullman gives Jack and Wendy a tour of the place, informing them that “construction started in 1907. It was finished in 1909. The site is supposed to be located on an Indian burial ground, and I believe they actually had to repel a few Indian attacks as they were building it.” Although the Native Americans are long gone, traces of them are visible everywhere. The Colorado Lounge is draped with hangings that Mr. Ullman says are “based mainly on Navaho and Apache motifs.” Similar geometric patterns adorn the walls and carpets of the hallways down which Danny repeatedly races and plays. The original inhabitants of the place have been destroyed or displaced, and their land and culture taken over for the entertainment of the jet set that has summered at the *Overlook* ever since.

In possession of the Native Americans' land and goods, the *Overlook* depends on the expropriated labor of menial Others. Mr. Ullman's treatment of the women around him is telling. When Jack arrives for his interview, the manager offers him coffee, dispatching his secretary to make it with two supercilious syllables: “Susie.” Later, as the hotel empties out for the winter, he bids farewell to the “girls” who work underneath him. Although Lloyd and Grady are men, they wear the livery of “the House” and are its most obsequious retainers. And their standing is higher than that of Halloran, whom Grady dismisses as a “nigger” and “a nigger cook.” Jack's very presence at the *Overlook* is due to the superiority of capital to labor. As Mr. Ullman explains during his interview, “the winters can be fantastically cruel, and the basic idea is ... to cope with the very costly damage and depreciation which can occur. And this consists mainly of running the boiler, heating different parts of the hotel on a daily rotating basis, repairing damage as it occurs and doing repairs, so that the elements can't get a foothold.” Significantly, no mention is made of a salary or wages for Jack. He and his family will receive room and board, and have time for other pursuits.

Jack's intention is to use his stay at the *Overlook* to work on his “new writing project.” His ambition is to become a celebrated novelist, and enjoy the elite lifestyle he now experiences vicariously. At the bar, Jack adopts the feigned bonhomie of the leisure class. Although the bartender consistently calls

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63 Rose 1992, 208. See also Griffith 1995, 84, who claims that “in his behavior at Aulis, and before the palace door when confronted by his wife, King Agamemnon represents in many respects the embodiment of the democratically-perceived upper-class wastrel: ever amassing, flaunting, and squandering wealth, indiscriminate in violence, disrespectful of boundaries, sexually inconsiderate, yet easily dominated by a woman.”

him "Mr. Torrance," Jack patronizes him in return: "I like you, Lloyd. I always liked you. You were always the best of them. Best goddamned bartender from Timbuktu to Portland, Maine—Portland, Oregon for that matter." And after bending his inferior's ear about his domestic problems, Jack seeks sympathy, exclaiming "white man's burden, Lloyd my man. White man's burden."

Jack's interaction with Grady follows a similar track. After the butler spills liquor on him and apologizes, Jack responds thus:

- Jack: Looks as if you might have got a spot of it on yourself there, Jeevesy old boy.  
 Grady: That doesn't matter, sir. You're the important one.  
 Jack: Awfully nice of you to say. Of course, I intend to change my jacket this evening before the fish and goose soiree.

The gentlemen's room provides the setting for Grady's attempts to clean up Jack. As Kuperski observes:

Here the bathroom may seem to support a ritual of equalization, in which men whatever their social status or financial position are forced, penis in hand, to acknowledge their basic sameness before nature if not God. In reality, the bathroom is performing its function of supplementing the actual individual with a cosmetic persona, as Jack becomes a rich white man delicately catered to by a servant who knows his place and among whose duties is that of going along with the *pretense* of equality and mutual respect—a pleasure, that of condescension, reserved for the powerful.<sup>64</sup>

Such is the position to which Jack aspires.

At first Jack pursues with diligence his self-appointed task, typing away in the Colorado Lounge. (Interestingly, we never see him attend to any of the custodial duties specified by Mr. Ullman). But as the film proceeds, his writerly routine increasingly involves sleeping late, having Wendy serve him breakfast in bed, and declaring part of the hotel off-limits to his family so that he can concentrate on his demanding work. Moreover, when he is alone we see him not hunched over his typewriter, but repeatedly hurling a tennis ball against the beautiful walls and floor. Still later, after Wendy intrudes and reads part of a draft in his absence, we see it consists of nothing but endless, formalistic

64 Kuperski 2012, 38.

variations on the sentence “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.”<sup>65</sup> We might be forgiven for thinking that Jack’s work/play ratio had already become infinitesimally small. And so Wendy’s desire to leave the Overlook to get help for Danny hits Jack right where he lives:

- Jack: It is so fucking typical of you to create a problem like this when I finally have a chance to accomplish something. When I’m really into my work. I could really write my own ticket if I went back to Boulder now, couldn’t I? Shoveling out drive-ways, work in a car wash—any of that appeal to you?
- Wendy: Jack ...
- Jack: Wendy, I have let you fuck up my life so far, but I’m not going to let you fuck this up.

For Jack, leaving the hotel would mean the end of his daydreams of leisure and privilege, and a descent into hard, unglamorous, underpaid physical labor at the behest of others.

As director, Kubrick regularly sought to redefine the filmic genres in which he worked.<sup>66</sup> With *The Shining* he succeeded to such an extent that critics still do not agree on the film’s relationship to the category of horror: is it a splendid specimen,<sup>67</sup> an ungainly and failed effort,<sup>68</sup> or even parodic?<sup>69</sup> The Aeschylean

65 Naremore 2007, 194, citing Fredric Jameson, understands this literary output as “either the ultimate dada novel or an ‘empty auto-referential statement ... As a writer Jack can only repeat himself—an appropriate action for a man who loves the storied, leisure-class atmosphere of the Overlook.”

66 Kuperski 2012, 10: “Kubrick’s deepening of film genre, evident in all of his mature films, is in essence a modernist reinscription of the commercial categories of the movie business. Kubrick’s films worked with and against the grain of commercial cinema to discover new and unexpected qualities in genre.”

67 According to Kroll (quoted in LoBrutto 1997, 412), “the first epic horror film, *The Shining* is to other horror movies what 2001: *A Space Odyssey* was to other space movies.”

68 Naremore 2007, 203: “When the picture was released, Kubrick indicated that he wanted to make one of the most frightening movies of all time. If that was the case, he didn’t succeed. What he made is an intellectualised, formally rigorous, genuinely disturbing satire of American paternity—a film that runs somewhat against the grain of King’s novel and the horror-film cycle of its day.”

69 Caldwell and Umland 1986, 110–1: “Can we take any of this seriously? Are we supposed to? Kubrick’s manipulation of the play metaphor, together with its adjuncts—stereotyped characters and plot, banal dialogue, allusions to fairy tales and cartoons, as well as his self-reflexivity—suggest that *The Shining*, as an object to bear ‘meaning,’ cannot sustain



resonances traced here support the notion that, while *The Shining* is indeed superb, it is anything but a straightforward representative of its kind. The film is “less about ghosts and demonic possession than it is about the murderous system of economic exploitation that has sustained this country since, like the Overlook Hotel, it was built upon an Indian burial ground that stretched quite literally ‘From sea to shining sea.’”<sup>70</sup> Its thrills and chills ultimately derive from another largely invisible source, namely “the horror of living in a society which is predicated upon murder and must constantly deny the fact to itself.”<sup>71</sup> Kubrick’s wealthy hotel preys upon the less powerful, both indoors and out. Not for nothing did *Agamemnon*’s chorus state (774–6) that justice prefers plainer abodes.<sup>72</sup>

Following good Aeschylean precedent, we conclude with an abrupt but appropriate change of scene. Like *Agamemnon*, *Libation Bearers* was set in Mycenae. By contrast, *Eumenides* opens with the *skene* representing the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. And shortly thereafter the scene refocuses, with the *skene* becoming first one and then perhaps a second unspecified building at Athens.<sup>73</sup> Following his acquittal on the Areopagus by the vote of Athena,<sup>74</sup> Orestes announces that he is headed home (754–8):

ὦ Παλλὰς, ὦ σώσασα τοὺς ἐμοὺς δόμους·  
καὶ γῆς πατρώιας ἐστερημένον σύ τοι  
κατῳικισάς με· καὶ τις Ἑλλήνων ἐρεῖ  
“Ἀργεῖος ἀνὴρ αὖθις, ἐν τε χρήμασιν  
οἰκεῖ πατρώιοις.”

Pallas, you have saved my house, and after I was stripped of my native land, you led me back home. The Greeks will say ‘He is an Argive again, and dwells among his ancestral goods.’

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the ponderous social psychology which film scholars have imputed to it ... We submit that Kubrick’s manipulation of the play metaphor in *The Shining* obviates the film’s aesthetic force and therefore undermines any ‘serious’ intent.”

70 Cook 1984, 2.

71 Cook 1984, 3.

72 Lines 774–6: Δίκη δὲ λάμπει μὲν ἐν δυσκάπνοις δώμασιν/ τὸν δ’ ἐναΐσιμον τίει/ βίον (“Justice gleams in smoky hovels, honoring the righteous life”).

73 On the difficulty of specifying a single precise Athenian locale see Sommerstein 1989, 123.

74 On the contemporary and dramatic dimensions of Athena’s ψῆφος (“ballot token”), see Bakewell 2013.

Orestes' purification by Apollo, the departure of the Furies for Athens, and Athena's intervention have together saved the house of Atreus, making it safe for human habitation once more.<sup>75</sup> The ghosts are gone, and the duties prescribed by Argos' newly concluded alliance with Athens (συμμάχῳι δορί, 773) will entail no unholy acts.<sup>76</sup>

*The Shining* offers no such comforting resolution, diverging significantly from the book in this regard. King's novel culminates in a great ghostly revel modeled on Poe's short story "The Masque of the Red Death;" at the stroke of midnight the boiler explodes, destroying the hotel. While Jack is killed, Wendy, Danny, and the wounded Halloran all make it to safety. But in Kubrick's version, the hotel survives and indeed thrives; the portrait of Jack frozen in time at the 1921 ball still adorns its wall.<sup>77</sup> The place is simply biding its time, waiting for another winter when Grady and Jack will both be on duty to welcome to their ranks a newly chosen caretaker. Meanwhile, we in the audience are left to ponder the film's many ambiguities, not least what final position we occupy as gazers. Could it be that our own desires, and our attempts to fulfill them, have brought us inside the Overlook to serve it in time to come?<sup>78</sup>

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- 75 Orestes' announcement provides a welcome alternative to the dreadful future envisioned by the chorus at *Agamemnon* 1530–4, namely the collapse of the house (πίτνοντος οἴκου, 1532) in bloody rain (δμβρου κτύπον δομοσφαλή/ τὸν αἵματηρόν, 1533–4).
  - 76 On the circumstances surrounding the creation of the Athenian-Argive alliance in 461/o see Thucydides 1.102.3; on *Eumenides*' favorable treatment of the same, see Sommerstein 1989, 30.
  - 77 The photo also functions like the precise time cards used in *The Shining*: it has an ironic dimension, given the film's emphasis on "the metamorphic and permeable aspect of time itself." See Kuperski 2012, 8.
  - 78 Cook 1984, 2: "we are being told that true horror is not extraordinary but surrounds us every day and, as Auden wrote of evil, 'sits with us at the dinner table.'" For the ways in which the final photograph involves us as spectators see Smith 1997, 300, 305. On the possibility of similar audience implication in ancient Athens see Griffith 1995, 122, who argues that ordinarily spectators were kept at a healthy remove from the sufferings they witnessed by an "implicit covenant entered on by poet and audience as they enter[ed] the 'safe space' of the Theater of Dionysus."

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# “Now Harkonnen Shall Kill Harkonnen”: Aeschylus, Dynastic Violence, and Twofold Tragedies in Frank Herbert’s *Dune*

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## Introduction

Despite being only intermittently popular in the reception of classical literature,<sup>1</sup> Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*—consisting of *Agamemnon*, *Libation Bearers*, and *Eumenides*,<sup>2</sup> and first performed in Athens in 458 BCE—has surfaced in some of the most prominent works of contemporary Anglo-American speculative fiction during the past half century. Most notably, the nearly eleven million eager readers who purchased on its first day of release *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007),<sup>3</sup> the last installment in J. K. Rowling’s blockbuster fantasy series, encountered in the novel’s epigraph (xi) a quotation from *Libation Bearers* (466–78, in the translation of Fagles 1984):

Oh, the torment bred in the race,  
the grinding scream of death  
and the stroke that hits the vein,  
the hemorrhage none can staunch, the grief,  
the curse no man can bear.

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- 1 For a sketch of the transmission and reception of the *Oresteia* (with further bibliography), see Raeburn and Thomas 2011, lxix–lxxiv.
  - 2 According to the hypothesis for *Agamemnon*, the *Oresteia* also included a satyr-drama, the lost *Proteus*; see Page 1972, 137, lines 21–3. It is speculated that *Proteus* dealt with Menelaus and Helen’s fortunes in Egypt during the voyage home from Troy, a story also told in book 4 of Homer’s *Odyssey* and in Euripides’ *Helen*; see Smyth and Lloyd-Jones 1999, 455.
  - 3 In the United States, 8.3 million copies of *Deathly Hallows* were sold within the first 24 hours; in Great Britain, 2.65 million. For news reports on the sales figures, see Rich 2007. The Wikipedia entry (s. v. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry\\_Potter\\_and\\_the\\_Deathly\\_Hallows](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Potter_and_the_Deathly_Hallows)) estimates that fifteen million copies sold worldwide, but the source for this figure is unclear.

But there is a cure in the house,  
 and not outside it, no,  
 not from others but from them,  
 their bloody strife. We sing to you,  
 dark gods beneath the earth.

Now hear, you blissful powers underground—  
 answer the call, send help,  
 Bless the children, give them triumph now.<sup>4</sup>

Any quotation from Aeschylus—much less three full stanzas of an Aeschylean choral ode cited in an internationally anticipated work of modern fantasy—may have come as something of a surprise. While contemporary students tend to encounter Sophocles and Euripides in secondary education, each dramatist seen as appealing to our own modern or “postmodern” sensibilities,<sup>5</sup> the works of Aeschylus have not achieved the same widespread recognition in mainstream consciousness.<sup>6</sup> What, then, is it about Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* that its influence is so prominent in speculative fiction—not only in the most recognized works of recent modern fantasy,<sup>7</sup> but also in the best-selling and

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4 On interpretations of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* in the *Harry Potter* series, see Granger 2008 and Mills 2009; I expand on their views in a forthcoming essay, “Ghosts of Aeschylus in J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* Series.” On Rowling’s education in the classics, see Sapiens 2002.

5 Most notable is the popularity of Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus*, which drama Aristotle praises in the *Poetics* and whose influence subsequently has reached deeply into popular culture; a useful case study is Bucher 2015, which explores the influence of (mis)understandings about the *Poetics* and *Oedipus Tyrannus* on the science fiction film *Forbidden Planet* (dir. Wilcox 1956).

6 This is not to say that the *Oresteia* has not been repeatedly and widely re-performed; see (e.g., on performances of *Agamemnon*) Macintosh et al. 2005.

7 While completing this chapter, there premiered an episode of the popular fantasy series *Game of Thrones* (episode 5.9, “The Dance of Dragons”) in which an invading commander (Stannis Baratheon) sacrifices his daughter (Shireen) in order to placate the gods, cause an adverse storm to relent, and allow his army to invade enemy territory. Marcotte 2015 has noted the parallels both in *Game of Thrones* to classical tragedy and in this particular scene to Greek tragedy, but reductively (and perhaps also incorrectly) compares the scene to Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Aulis* alone; I suspect the episode’s authors (David Benioff and D. B. Weiss) may rather draw on Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, if not the wider tradition concerning the sacrifice of Iphigenia (including both Aeschylus and Euripides’ versions). At any rate, the episode demonstrates that Aeschylus and Greek tragedy maintain an ongoing presence in mainstream modern fantasy.

arguably the most recognized science fiction novel, Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1965)?<sup>8</sup>

This question, of course, is predicated on another question: does *Dune*, in fact, constitute a reception of the *Oresteia*? At first glance, *Dune* is strikingly similar to the *Harry Potter* novels in its concern with blood feuds, in its assertion that "there is no escape—we pay for the violence of our ancestors" (*Dune* 146).<sup>9</sup> However, before we can evaluate why Aeschylus is thought to have influenced *Dune*—and therefore merits inclusion in a volume on receptions of Aeschylus—we would be well advised first to establish securely that what we see in *Dune* is indeed a reception of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. For example, what may appear to be a reception of Aeschylus may in fact be a reception of Greek drama in general, or the ancient epic tradition, or a modern narrative tradition that has very loosely borrowed from antiquity. For, in contrast to Rowling's explicit quotation of the choral ode from the *Libation Bearers*, Herbert never cites the *Oresteia* in *Dune*. How are we to discern, then, the difference between two possible reception scenarios (*inter alia*), whether *Dune* has "received" the *Oresteia*, or both *Dune* and the *Oresteia* are similarly but coincidentally, in the apocryphal words of Aeschylus himself, "portions from the great feasts of Homer"?<sup>10</sup>

In this chapter I explore two distinct but interrelated interpretations of the possible relationship between Aeschylus' *Oresteia* and Frank Herbert's *Dune*.<sup>11</sup>

8 Brian Herbert 2003, 171 records that Frank Herbert originally expected *Dune* to be a trilogy. Much of the story was then published serially in two parts (as "Dune World" and "The Prophet of Dune") between 1963–1965 in *Analog* magazine. In turn, these two parts were expanded, revised, and published together as the single novel *Dune* in 1965, with the contents divided into three books (entitled "Dune," "Muad'Dib," and "The Prophet"). According to Brian Herbert 2010, 873, the novel had sold more than ten million copies by 1979, and as of 2005 had sold "tens of millions of copies all over the world, in more than twenty languages" and become "the most admired science fiction novel ever written" (871). On the significance of *Dune* in its fiftieth anniversary, see Walter 2015 and Kunzru 2015.

9 Editions of *Dune* vary widely in their pagination, page count, and some ancillary content, ranging from the first edition (1965, 412 pages) to the recent Ace premium edition (2010, 883 pages). In this chapter, all citations of *Dune* refer to the 1990 ("Ace Special 25th Anniversary") edition.

10 According to Athenaeus in the *Deipnosophists*, it is Aeschylus "who used to say that his own tragedies were portions from the great feasts of Homer" (ὅς τὰς αὐτοῦ τραγωδίας τεμάχῃ εἶναι ἔλεγε τῶν Ὀμήρου μεγάλων δείπνων, 8.347e).

11 For our purposes here, I focus exclusively on the novel *Dune* (1965) and not on the entire series of novels that followed written by Herbert himself, including *Dune Messiah* (1969), *Children of Dune* (1976), *God Emperor of Dune* (1981), *Heretics of Dune* (1984), and

First, I focus on structural and generic features, as well as the particular theme of intergenerational dynastic violence, in order to suggest that Aeschylus and Frank Herbert are both authors who engage in speculative fiction, influenced by the hero tale tradition but taking the form of tragedy. Second, I argue that *Dune* may be productively read as a direct reception of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* with respect to particular linguistic and stylistic features, focusing on names and doubling/ambiguous language, especially in regards to knowledge gained through training (*pathei mathos*, "learning through suffering") and prophecy. I conclude by offering a tentative answer to the initial questions I posed above: what is it about Aeschylus' *Oresteia* that it has found such a prominent place in contemporary speculative fiction? And what might this tell us about speculative fiction or our own readings of Aeschylus?

### *Dune* as Reception of Classical Structures

There are two broad categories of criteria that will be particularly useful for identifying in *Dune* possible receptions of classical antiquity and the *Oresteia*: macro-level themes and patterns, and micro-level details such as lexemes (i.e., significant names and terminology), possible intertexts, and stylistic features. In this section I wish to start with the macro-level themes and patterns, since scholarship on *Dune* has focused primarily on such large-scale criteria, and thus this discussion simultaneously offers a review of that scholarship. In service of this macro-level analysis, and since this volume is likely to attract readers familiar with the *Oresteia* but not necessarily with *Dune*, a work of science fiction (hereafter "SF"), I offer the following summary of the novel.

*Dune* follows the events surrounding Paul Atreides, the fifteen-year-old son of the Duke Leto Atreides and his concubine Lady Jessica, as the Atreides family relocates from their home world of Caladan to the desert planet of Arrakis,

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*Chapterhouse: Dune* (1985). I also pass over the additional novels in the *Dune* universe written by Brian Herbert and Kevin J. Anderson; these novels are either based on notes discovered after Herbert's death or are "prequels" based on the existing canonical *Dune* novels. I omit discussion of, but direct interested readers to, the companion book *The Road to Dune* (2005), which includes earlier and unused material, as well as correspondence—all produced prior to the publication of *Dune*. Furthermore, I pass over the many filmic adaptations of *Dune*, including the movie *Dune* (dir. David Lynch 1984), the Sci Fi Channel three-part miniseries *Frank Herbert's Dune* (dir. John Harrison 2000) and its sequel *Frank Herbert's Children of Dune* (dir. Greg Yaitanes 2003), as well as the recent documentary *Jodorowsky's Dune* (dir. Frank Pavich 2013) about director Alejandro Jodorowsky's unsuccessful attempt in the mid-1970s to produce *Dune* as a film.



also known as Dune, in order to take control of the production of a valuable geriatric spice called "melange." Melange gives its users prophetic powers (referred to as "prescience") and is crucial for navigators in the interstellar commerce of the Imperium, the feudal government of the universe. The ruler of the Imperium, the Padishah Emperor Shaddam IV, has transferred control of Arrakis to the Atrides from a rival clan, the Harkonnens, whom Leto suspects of planning to murder the Atrides clan. The Baron Vladimir Harkonnen successfully orchestrates the assassination of Duke Leto, but both Paul and a pregnant Jessica escape into the desert, where they come under the protection of the planet's native inhabitants, the Fremen.

During the course of these events, Paul intuitively feels that Jessica, whose parentage has been a mystery even to herself, is the daughter of Baron Harkonnen. Paul also discovers that he is the product of a generations-long genetic breeding program conducted by a female religious order known as the Bene Gesserit, by which order Jessica has been trained. Jessica believes Paul to be the Kwisatz Haderach, a male Bene Gesserit whose mental powers will bridge space and time. While he is among the Fremen, Paul develops his powers as a prophet and establishes himself as a spiritual and military leader who is prophesied to lead the Fremen and subsequently unleash a jihad on the universe. Jessica similarly establishes herself as Reverend Mother among the Fremen and gives birth to a daughter, Alia; this daughter is preternaturally mature and possesses the ability to see the past.

In the third part of the novel, Paul is initiated into the Fremen tribe, eventually leading the Fremen and the remaining Atrides forces in a successful assault upon the Harkonnens, who now occupy the Atrides' former palace at Arrakeen. Alia assassinates the Baron (her grandfather) and Paul defeats in single combat his cousin, the vicious Feyd-Rautha, nephew of Baron Harkonnen and heir to House Harkonnen. Paul negotiates with Emperor Shaddam IV to marry the emperor's daughter, Princess Irulan, thus establishing Paul's dominion over the Imperium but also making inevitable the prophesied jihad.

### *Dune, Religion, and Culture*

Much scholarship on *Dune* has sought to make sense of this complex narrative in terms of two particular, broad-scale religious and ethnocultural influences from our own real-world history.<sup>12</sup> On the one hand, critics detect the influence of medieval European Christianity, as seen in the following: the

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12 Brian Herbert 2003, 178–83 offers a comprehensive, if somewhat uncritical, survey of the diverse cultural influences on *Dune*, perhaps coming closest to what we might call "authorial intent."

prominent use of terms belonging to Galach, the official language of the Imperium, that are derived from Indo-European languages and especially Latin (e.g., Imperium, Bene Gesserit, Missionaria Protectiva, Salusa Secundus, etc.);<sup>13</sup> the Imperium's feudal economy; and the presence of the Bene Gesserit religious order.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, critics also point to the influence of Bedouin/Muslim culture, as seen in the desert-inhabiting Fremen, in their "barely displaced Arabic terms,"<sup>15</sup> and in their fervent anticipation of a messianic prophet, the Lisan Al-Gaib or Mahdi.<sup>16</sup> Another set of critics have preferred to look back further in our own historical time to read *Dune*'s Imperium as a science-fictional Roman Empire, focusing on the novel's interest in imperial decadence and decline, characterized by a stagnation in innovation throughout the Imperium and leading to a rise in religious belief and superstition.<sup>17</sup> Such readings also emphasize Herbert's interest throughout *Dune* in advanced psychological practices that predict large-scale historical shifts (i.e., prescience), tying *Dune* closely to another antecedent in SF, Isaac

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- 13 Csicsery-Ronay 2008, 40. He also notes that Herbert 1990, 518 explicitly defines Galach as "Hybrid Inglo-Slavic with strong traces of cultural-specialization-terms adopted during the long chain of human migrations" (although Csicsery-Ronay misquotes Herbert as writing Indo-Slavic).
  - 14 Moskowitz 1966, 428 sees *Dune* as largely medieval, while Mulcahy 1996 specifically reads *Dune* as in dialogue with Machiavelli's *The Prince*. List 2009 examines the novel in terms of Christian thought, but is careful to locate such thought within the context of both "the Puritan understanding of work ... [and] a liberal Protestant and countercultural affirmation of immanence and personal spirituality" (44) that were contemporary to the novel's composition. In *Dune* (53), Jessica refers to a saying of St. Augustine ("The mind commands the body and it obeys. The mind orders itself and meets resistance," from *Confessions* 8.9).
  - 15 Csicsery-Ronay 2008, 39.
  - 16 Jones 1997, 4 describes the novel's cultural influences thusly: "What happens in *Dune* (amidst a wealth of future-Byzantine court intrigue) is that a rich white boy in a clearly recognisable fictional Middle East is adopted by some quasi-Islamic tribesfolk and becomes a version of Mohammed." Cf. Csicsery-Ronay 2008, 39–41 on the Orientalist connotations of Herbert's use of Arabic for the language of the Fremen.
  - 17 For example, DiTommaso 2007 argues that Edward Gibbons' *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* may be a significant source for ideas about imperial decadence and decline in *Dune*, in particular with respect to the court of Emperor Shaddam IV and Baron Harkonnen; cf. DiTommaso 1992. The identification of the Imperium as the Roman Empire is both intensified and complicated by the fact that the Harkonnen capital city on Arrakis is called Carthage, evoking the ancient city of Carthage, enemy of the Roman Republic in the Punic Wars but no longer a real threat (except in mythological thinking) by the time of the Roman Empire.

Asimov's *Foundation* series (1942–1993); in this series, the protagonist Hari Seldon uses not prescience but a branch of mathematical sociology called "psychohistory" to predict a millennia-long upheaval of the decadent and stagnating Galactic Empire, which some scholars have also compared to the Roman Empire.<sup>18</sup>

These readings of *Dune* in terms of Roman, medieval European, and Arabic history point to a complex multiculturalism—perhaps even a cultural omnivorousness—in the novel, which includes distinctly Greek features. Most obviously, the name of *Dune*'s protagonists, the Atreides clan, is Greek, meaning "son of Atreus" and hinting at the Greek mythic figure of Agamemnon.<sup>19</sup> Even Leto's physical features suggest that he is Greek or at least Mediterranean; at one point Jessica "looked at his tallness, at the dark skin that made her think of olive groves and golden sun on blue water" (*Dune* 49). Moreover, Greekness seems both linked and set in contrast to the Byzantine; for example, a Fremen asserts that he will not betray the surviving Atreides to the Harkonnens, claiming that "You think we have the Byzantine corruption. You don't know us" (*Dune* 211).<sup>20</sup> It is hard not to conclude that Herbert uses the name Atreides at the very least to connote the idea of the "ancient," "noble," and "aristocratic," such that *Dune* appears to be a narrative about an old-style (Greek) Duke in a decadent (Roman, Catholic, or Byzantine) empire that exploits the natives of a desert (Bedouin) planet in the promotion of its economic (Western Medieval) interests. Such broad-scale religious and ethnocultural readings, however, do not necessarily support reading *Dune* as a reception of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*.

### *Dune, Epic, and Tragedy*

Herbert's focus on large-scale historical conflict, however, has encouraged another set of critics to approach *Dune* as epic, and this interpretive strain is of greater interest for our purposes here.<sup>21</sup> Most recently, Joel Christensen has examined *Dune* alongside Homer's *Iliad* and the epic tradition, and his reading

18 DiTommaso 2007 observes the interest in imperial decline shared by both Herbert and Asimov. Grigsby 1981 more forcefully argues that *Dune* is directly influenced by the *Foundation* series, focusing on the shared treatment of the fall and subsequent restoration of empires; Grigsby also notes comparisons between the *Foundation* series and the Roman Empire (149).

19 Kunzru 2015 claims more specifically that the Atreides clan is "Homerically named" but offers no supporting evidence; I indicate the complications with such a claim below.

20 Cf. the quotation from Jones 1997 in n. 16 above.

21 On *Dune* as epic, see Collings 1981, Cirasa 1984, DiTommaso 2007, and Christensen 2015; cf. Palumbo 1998, especially 436.

is suggestive of some possible ways by which we may link *Dune* to the genre of Greek drama, if not to Aeschylus or the *Oresteia* directly.

Christensen argues that *Dune* “is both indebted to and a revision of the ancient epic genre” with respect to the themes of time and self-reflexive knowledge of the power of storytelling.<sup>22</sup> Christensen suggests that both the *Iliad* and *Dune* are modes of mythmaking that use the creation of other worlds in alternate timescapes—albeit worlds that “reflect and refract [concerns] from the world(s) of its audience”—in order to distance the audience from its own spatio-temporal framework and to “furnish opportunities for social and critical reflection.”<sup>23</sup> Key to his view is the treatment of time in both texts, which “similarly conceptualize and instrumentalize the future and the past, subordinating both to their needs as they position *their* stories as both the culmination of the past and midwife to a derivative future” (his emphasis).<sup>24</sup> In other words, both the *Iliad* and *Dune* use visions of the past and future (achieved through such narrative devices as divine knowledge, recounted genealogies, prophecy, and prescience) in order to establish their narrative present as crucial “moments of foundational transformation.”<sup>25</sup> Finally, Christensen suggests that both the *Iliad* and *Dune* are also self-referential tales, “reflect[ing] on their own status as narratives” and featuring protagonists who are “facing up to the paradigmatic and manipulative power of stories.”<sup>26</sup>

Most of the criteria that Christensen identifies as belonging to the epic tradition are arguably also attributes of the later genre of Greek tragedy: like epic, tragedy is also a mode of mythmaking that commonly locates action in other worlds and timescapes—most commonly, but not exclusively, places and events set during the heroic age.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, tragedies regularly make extensive use of visions of the past (by means of prologues, remembered

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22 Christensen 2015, 162–3.

23 Christensen 163–4.

24 Christensen 162–3.

25 Christensen 166–70; quotation from 166.

26 Christensen 170–5; quotations from 170–1.

27 Two notable exceptions are found among the seven extant dramas attributed to Aeschylus: our only surviving historical Greek drama, *Persians* (produced in 472 BCE); and *Prometheus Bound*, which is set at an even earlier mythic time, the beginning of the reign of Zeus several generations before the heroic age. Nevertheless, I would argue that *Prometheus Bound* displays several attributes Christensen identifies as “epic” in that the drama similarly “conceptualize[s] and instrumentalize[s] the future and the past, subordinating both to [its] needs as [it] position[s] [its] stories as both the culmination of the past and midwife to a derivative future.” Here I remain silent on the thorny question of the authorship of *Prometheus Bound*; interested readers may usefully consult (e.g.),

genealogies, citations of older myths, and mantic insight) and the future (predominately by means of prophecies, auspices, dreams, and seers) so as to suggest that the dramas are "moments of foundational transformation," whether offering an etiology for the establishment of particular cults or institutions, or marking a major transition between political regimes. Finally, many Greek dramas are self-referential, reflecting on the paradigmatic and manipulative power of story, song, and speech. This is particularly true of the *Oresteia*, which explores the power of *logos* and systematically links *mousikê* (song, dance, and story) to political order.<sup>28</sup> This is not to claim that epic and drama are identical poetic genres, although it is useful to observe that Aristotle differentiates epic and drama primarily according to formal features, such as length and verse-form (τὸ μῆκος ... καὶ τὸ μέτρον, *Poetics* 1459b17–18), and not in terms of the criteria Christensen discusses.<sup>29</sup> In short, Christensen's argument points us to the possibility that what most critics see as epic in *Dune* may in fact also be tragic.

We might sidestep these large-scale and epic criteria, if only momentarily, by recognizing that we can also summarize *Dune* with the following, reductive sentence: "*Dune* is the tale of a leader who has been assassinated by a rival cousin and whose death is avenged by his son and daughter." To those who know their classical myth, this summary may once again evoke the Greek myth of the House of Atreus. Brian Herbert, Frank Herbert's son and the author of his father's biography, *Dreamer of Dune* (2003), confirms that the House Atreides in *Dune* is based on the House of Atreus in Greek myth: "A heroic family, it was tragically beset by flaws and burdened with a curse pronounced on them by Thyestes ... The evil Harkonnens of *Dune* are related to the Atreides by blood, so when they kill Paul's father, Duke Leto, it is kinsmen killing kinsmen, just as occurred in the household of Agamemnon."<sup>30</sup> At this most basic level of the plot, we may therefore assert that *Dune* receives the myth of the House of Atreus, particularly in relation to the theme of intergenerational dynastic violence. Indeed, Part 11 of the novel opens as Paul recognizes his own role

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Herington 1970; Taplin 1977, 240, 460–9; Griffith 1977; Saïd 1985, 9–12; Bees 1993; and Podlecki 2005, 195–201.

28 On *logos*, see Goldhill 1986, 1–31. On musical and political order, see Wilson and Taplin 1993.

29 Cf. Herington 1985, who makes a case for the generic affiliation between Greek drama and epic poetry (among other poetic traditions), arguing that drama was realized "when some tragedian decided to adapt the Homeric techniques ... to the dramatic realization of the Greek mythological heritage generally" (138).

30 Herbert 2003, 178.

in this cycle of violence, whispering “Now Harkonnen shall kill Harkonnen” (*Dune* 203).

The mere appearance of intergenerational dynastic violence of course neither confirms nor denies that *Dune* draws on Greek tragedy or Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* *per se*. The characters, plots, and themes of the *Oresteia* do not belong exclusively to Aeschylean tragedy, as various parts of the House of Atreus myth appear prior to the *Oresteia* in archaic Greek epic (notably Homer’s *Odyssey*), lyric poetry (Stesichorus’ lost *Oresteia*, Pindar *Pythian* 11), and visual media,<sup>31</sup> as well as after the *Oresteia* (but still prior to the writing of *Dune*), most notably in the extant dramas of Sophocles (*Electra*), Euripides (*Electra*, *Iphigenia Among the Taurians*, *Orestes*, *Iphigenia in Aulis*), and Seneca the younger (*Agamemnon*, *Thyestes*). It is suggestive, however, that Rowling uses the quotation from Aeschylus’ *Libation Bearers* in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (cited at the beginning of this chapter) to invoke precisely this theme of intergenerational dynastic violence, as if the *Oresteia* were for twentieth-century audiences a *locus classicus* of this theme. Nevertheless, any argument for *Dune* as a reception of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* based only on the theme of intergenerational dynastic violence—or any other macro-level criteria for that matter—will necessarily be limited, since such narrative elements are shared among so many different iterations of the House of Atreus myth.

There is evidence available to support the argument that *Dune* draws indirectly on the epic tradition. Amid his discussion of the various cultural influences on *Dune*, Brian Herbert describes the appearance of Greek names and figures in terms of “mythology and other mythological bases,” as well as with respect to the archetype of the hero in the popular theories of Carl Gustav Jung, Joseph Campbell, and Lord Raglan.<sup>32</sup> Brian Herbert does not refer to epic as a genre in this discussion, but remains focused on the hero tradition, describing Paul Atreides as “the hero prince on a quest.”<sup>33</sup> Indeed, it is not difficult to map the plot of the three books of *Dune* onto the three-act, rites-of-passage structure of the Hero’s Journey, as can be seen in Figure 23.1.<sup>34</sup> Rather than see

31 For a recent survey of the *Oresteia* myth in Greek epic, lyric, and visual media before Aeschylus (with further bibliography), see Raeburn and Thomas 2011, xxii–xxx.

32 Herbert 2003, 178–9.

33 Herbert 2003, 178.

34 On the Hero’s Journey or “Monomyth” in *Dune* and as a “fractal pattern” in the *Dune* novels, see Palumbo 1998 and 2002, as well as the critique of Hassler 2003. On the history and broad influence of the Monomyth in popular culture (with special reference to film and comics), see Rogers 2011.

*Dune* as “indebted to and a revision of the ancient epic genre,” it may therefore be more accurate to say that *Dune* “is based instead on a *theory* of Greek heroic myth”<sup>35</sup>—or, more precisely, is based on the ancient epic genre as mediated by early-twentieth-century theories of the hero.

One particularly telling example that *Dune* draws on hero tales (and not epic *per se*) appears in Brian Herbert’s discussion of the Atreides’ home planet, Caladan. He claims the name is based on the Greek word “Calydon” and therefore is an allusion to the Calydonian boar hunt, a famous episode in Greek hero myth.<sup>36</sup> In Greek myth, the boar hunt functions as a rite of passage for young heroes; the Calydonian boar was particularly distinguished for the number of famous young heroes who participated, including such notable characters as Meleager, Theseus, Castor and Polydeuces, Peleus, Telamon, and Atalanta. There appear in *Dune* two variations on the beast hunt that suggest it is an important rite of passage: first, one of Duke Leto’s prized possessions is “a black bull’s head mounted on a polished board” (*Dune* 48) that hangs in the dining room, a symbol of the bravery of Leto’s father, the “Old Duke,”

	Hero's Journey	<i>Dune</i>
Act I: Departure  Book I: <i>Dune</i>	[Ordinary World] Call to Adventure Supernatural Aid/Mentor Crossing of the Threshold Belly of the Whale	[Caladan] Migration to Arrakis Gurney/Thufir/Idaho/Yueh/Jessica/Leto Paul & Jessica escape over the Shield Wall Paul & Jessica are trapped in the desert (incl. sandstorm at beginning of Book II)
Act II: Initiation  Book II: <i>Muad'Dib</i>	Road of Trials Meeting Goddess/Temptress The Ordeal Atonement w Father Apotheosis Ultimate Boon	Survival in the desert Chani / Harah Paul kills Jamis Revenge vowed for Leto / Liet Jessica & the Water of Life Jessica becomes prescient
Act III: Return  Book III: <i>The Prophet</i>	Magic Flight the Resurrection Crossing of Return Threshold Master of the Two Worlds Freedom to Live	Paul rides the Sand Worm Paul & the Water of Life/prescience Attack on the Shield Wall, Feyd-Rautha Paul is Muad'Dib & Emperor Paul will change cosmic cycle

FIGURE 23.1 *Dune and the Hero's Journey* (based on Campbell 1949, with minor modifications following Vogler 2007).

35 To borrow the phrasing of Bowman (on Greek myth in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*), as cited in James 2009, 2.

36 Herbert 2003, 179.

as a matador (*Dune* 157);<sup>37</sup> second, when Paul seeks full admission into the Fremen, he must track and mount a “maker,” a giant sandworm, then lead a raid against smugglers (*Dune* 401–408).<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, Brian Herbert does not connect the Calydonian boar hunt or these hunts in *Dune* to any specific classical source (such as *Iliad* 9, Bacchylides 5, or the François Vase) or literary genre (such as epic or lyric), focusing instead on the events and formal features of hero tales. In other words, Brian Herbert’s account suggests that Frank Herbert was thinking of the Calydonian boar hunt as a rite of passage, as an initiatory stage in hero tales and Campbell’s Hero’s Journey typology—to be sure, a typology based in part on the plots or *muthoi* found in the epic tradition (*inter alia*)—but not with respect to any specific texts (such as the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*) or of any features distinct to the epic genre (as Christensen argues).

While Brian Herbert does not discuss epic, he does argue for the specific influence of Greek tragedy on *Dune*. Early in the novel, the planetary ecologist Kynes tells Duke Leto and Jessica that “[i]t is said that in the desert that possession of water in great amount can inflict a man with fatal carelessness” (*Dune* 129). Brian Herbert claims:

This [passage] was an important reference to Greek hubris. Very few readers realized that the story of Paul Atreides was not only a Greek tragedy on an individual and familial scale. There was another layer, larger than Paul, and in that layer FH [Frank Herbert] was warning that entire societies could be led to ruination by a hero. In *Dune* ... he was cautioning against pride and excessive confidence, the hubris of Greek tragedies that led to the great fall. But it was societal-scale hubris he was warning against ... the potential demise of an entire society.<sup>39</sup>

Here Brian Herbert explicitly identifies Greek tragedy as a generic influence on *Dune*. Interestingly, he offers a rather particular interpretation of Greek tragedy in his emphasis on “the hubris of Greek tragedies that led to the great

37 The bull’s head may also evoke images from the House of Atreus myth, such as Agamemnon’s prowess in hunting (about which he boasts and thus angers Artemis) or the sacrifice of Iphigenia (as described, e.g., in *Ag.* 218–47).

38 When Paul successfully rides the sandworm, he tellingly claims “And I am a Fremen born this day here in the Habbanya erg. I have had no life before this day. I was as a child until this day” (*Dune* 404).

39 Herbert 2003, 191.



fall." It can be reasonably inferred that his interpretation, like his interpretation of epic, is based on a mid-twentieth-century interpretation of Greek drama (especially *Oedipus Tyrannos*) and hubris as "tragic flaw" in Aristotle's *Poetics*; these texts, as Gregory Bucher has recently discussed, were the "staples of undergraduate general education courses"<sup>40</sup> in the mid-1940s, when Frank Herbert attended (but did not graduate from) the University of Washington, even if such an "educated-layman's take ... no longer prevails, at least in specialist circles."<sup>41</sup> If Brian Herbert's account is reliable, then this suggests Frank Herbert at least drew directly on the *idea* of Greek tragedy for *Dune*, although it is not certain whether Herbert had in mind any particular drama, such as the *Oresteia*.

At this stage in our investigation, the evidence suggests not that *Dune* has "received" Greek tragedy *per se*, but rather that *Dune* is a monomythic hero narrative dressed in (vaguely) tragic buskin. In attempting to fit the conventions of the Greek hero tale into a self-consciously tragic style, Herbert may appear to receive Aeschylus, but such appearance may be illusory. Herbert seems rather to have engaged in a process somewhat akin to that which Aeschylus used, insofar as both authors reworked a pre-existing tradition of hero tales into a new genre (tragedy for Aeschylus, SF for Herbert). In this view, we might conclude that *Dune* is not so much a reception of Aeschylus as a text produced by creative concerns and forces vaguely similar, but not identical, to those used in the production of the *Oresteia*.

### *Dune* as Reception of the *Oresteia*

ἀμφίλεκτα πῆματα ἐμοὶ προφωνῶν

warning me of double / ambiguous tragedies

AESCHYLUS *AGAMEMNON* 881–2<sup>42</sup>

In the previous section, I argue that we may read *Dune* not as a reception of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, but as a hero tale, produced according to a modern monomythic framework and dressed in tragic style. Such an argument might suggest that Frank Herbert's engagement with Greek tragedy would have been

40 Bucher 2015, 125; cf. 132.

41 Bucher 2015, 126.

42 The text used for all citations of Aeschylus is Page 1972. All translations are my own.

somewhat superficial, mediated by contemporary ideas about tragedy, rather than a reading of any particular Greek tragedy. In this section, I wish to explore what Christensen has suggested are “superficial similarities” shared between the *Oresteia* and *Dune* in order to argue that such similarities may resonate more deeply with the *Oresteia* than previously observed.<sup>43</sup> In making this more forceful case, I aim to demonstrate the limits of Brian Herbert’s account of *Dune* and to suggest that Frank Herbert draws not only on the larger reservoir of Greek hero tales and Greek drama but specifically on the *Oresteia*. To make this argument, one could make a formalist argument by claiming that the narrative arc in *Dune* does not follow the three-act structure of the Monomyth, but rather the three-act structure of the *Oresteia* itself, for which I provide a possible example in Figure 23.2. However, rather than make this somewhat superficial formalist argument, in the following section I want to examine Herbert’s careful use throughout *Dune* of names and other twofold/ambiguous language, in particular with respect to knowledge gained through training and prophecy.

	<i>Oresteia</i>	<i>Dune</i>
<i>Agamemnon</i>	Orestes already sent away from home (Argos)	Paul departs from home planet (Caladan) & palace (Arrakeen)
"Book 1: <i>Dune</i> "	Assassination of father (Ag.)	Assassination of father (Leto)
<i>Libation Bearers</i>	Orestes: from liminal space to Argos (home) Aided by Apollo's voice Kills rivals (Cly. & Aeg.)	Paul: from liminal desert to Sietch (becomes new home) Aided by Jessica's voice Kills rival (Jamis)
"Book 2: Muad'Dib"	Pursued by Furies	Pursued by Harkonnens
<i>Eumenides</i>	Orestes purified by Apollo Aided by Apollo directly Journey to Athens	Paul purified by Water of Life Becomes Prophet himself Journey back to Arrakeen
"Book 3: The Prophet"	Legal Trial Orestes as king	Physical Trial (Feyd-Rautha) Paul as emperor

FIGURE 23.2     *Similarities in Narrative Arcs of Orestes and Paul Atrides.*

43     Christensen 2015, 163. The only reader I have discovered who explicitly suggests that *Dune* borrows from the *Oresteia* is Brown et al. 1994, 94.

### *Dune, Names, and Analogues*

As mentioned previously, the name of the protagonist, Paul Atreides, evokes the Greek patronymic Atreides, "son of Atreus" (Ἀτρείδης or epic Ἀτρεΐδης), in the singular. In Greek myth, the patronymic can refer to either of the sons of Atreus, Agamemnon or Menelaus. When transliterated into Latin, singular Atreides is indistinguishable from its plural form, "sons of Atreus" (Grk. Ἀτρεΐδαι). Both translations link Duke Leto and Paul to the House of Atreus, inviting us to consider whether there may be an analogous role<sup>44</sup> between the "son of Atreus" Duke Leto and a "son of Atreus," Agamemnon or Menelaus, or perhaps even both "sons of Atreus," Agamemnon and Menelaus. Such an analogy in turn produces a further equivalence<sup>45</sup> between Duke Leto's son, Paul, and either Agamemnon's son, Orestes, or Menelaus' bastard son, Megapenthes.<sup>46</sup> It is noteworthy here that "sons of Atreus" may be taken to refer to multiple generations, so as to include both father and son—for example, Agamemnon and Orestes, or Menelaus and Megapenthes. It is also worth observing that, when we first encounter Menelaus in Homer's *Odyssey* (4.3–19), he is celebrating the wedding of Megapenthes, whom the poet notes is both his "only" son (τηλύγετος, 4.11)<sup>47</sup> and "born from a slave" (ἐκ δουλῆς, 4.12).<sup>48</sup> Paul too is the Duke's only son by a concubine, Jessica, and not by a legitimate wife—a point emphasized early (*Dune* 4) and often in the novel.

If we take Duke Leto as analogous to Agamemnon (rather than Menelaus), two further equivalences are produced. First, Aegisthus, the cousin of Agamemnon who murders Agamemnon upon his return from the Trojan War, may correspond to Baron Harkonnen, who murders Duke Leto. Leto and Baron

44 Hardwick 2003, 9 defines "analogue" as "a comparable aspect between source and reception."

45 Hardwick defines "equivalent" as "fulfilling an analogous role in source and reception but necessarily identical in form or content."

46 According to Apollodorus (*Bibliotheca* 3.11), some sources claimed that Menelaus and Helen had a son Nicostratus.

47 The precise origin or meaning of τηλύγετος is uncertain. Liddell, Scott, et al. (1996: s. v. τηλύγετος) gloss it as pertaining to an "only" son for the *Odyssey* passage discussed above, but point to other meanings including "a darling son," a child "born far away," "well-beloved," or "latest-born" (i.e., "after whom no more are born," following their preferred ancient interpretation, Σ *T Iliad* 9.482).

48 Apollodorus (*Bibliotheca* 3.11) gives the slave's name as either Pieris (an Aitolian woman) or Tereis (according to Acousilaus). Apollodorus further relates that, according to Eumelus, Menelaus and the nymph Cnossia had another son, Xenodamus.

Harkonnen are not genetic cousins, although the Baron does refer to Leto as “cher cousin” (*Dune* 181), using what appears to be a title in formal address (cf. *Dune* 15). The revelation that Jessica is the daughter of Baron Harkonnen (*Dune* 198), however, does make Paul and Feyd-Rautha (Baron Harkonnen’s heir) cousins. *Dune* thus features two Aegisthoi—the “cher cousin” Baron Harkonnen and the actual cousin Feyd-Rautha—both of whom are rivals to the Atreides’ control of Arrakis. The second correspondence links Agamemnon’s daughter Electra to Alia, the daughter of Leto and Jessica. Although Alia presents many complications for this reading (given her age, prophetic powers, etc.), the pair of children Paul-Orestes and Alia-Electra makes possible an innovative solution to the inclusion of two Aegisthoi in *Dune*: each child of Atreus gets to kill an Aegisthus.<sup>49</sup>

The aforementioned illegitimacy of Menelaus’ son Megapenthes points to a further equivalence produced in the analogy of Agamemnon to Duke Leto. In the broader myth, Agamemnon returns home from Troy with Cassandra, the riddling priestess of Apollo, as his concubine. Cassandra, of course, is not the mother of Orestes, as that role belongs to Clytemnestra, who betrays Agamemnon and, in the *Oresteia*, murders him herself. We may therefore wonder whether Lady Jessica is an equivalent of Clytemnestra (as legitimate mother of Paul) or Cassandra (as concubine of Leto). Indeed Herbert appears to write this very question into the plot of *Dune* itself. Before the traitor within the Atreides household is revealed to the other characters,<sup>50</sup> Leto’s master of assassins, Thufir Hawat, suspects that Jessica is a Harkonnen agent plotting against the Duke (*Dune* 99–100), and her innocence is only confirmed once events play out.<sup>51</sup> As the narrative progresses Jessica increasingly takes on the appearance of Cassandra; Hawat accuses Jessica of “speak[ing] riddles” (*Dune* 152), and her prophetic powers develop more fully once she drinks the Water of Life and becomes a Reverend Mother (*Dune* 348–62). In other words, Herbert exploits this double role of Jessica as Clytemnestra/Cassandra in order to first suggest that Jessica may be (or become) a Clytemnestra who will betray Leto throughout Part I of *Dune*,<sup>52</sup> only then to develop Jessica as a Cassandra who

49 Perhaps Frank Herbert has taken a cue from Euripides’ *Electra*, in which both Orestes and Electra have their hands on the sword that slays Clytemnestra (1221–5).

50 Readers learn Baron Harkonnen’s plan early in the novel (*Dune* 19–20).

51 Thufir, it turns out, is half correct: Jessica is not a Harkonnen agent, but discovers she is the daughter of Baron Harkonnen (*Dune* 198).

52 There is even a brief moment at the end of Part I where Jessica may become Helen of Troy, as the two Harkonnen agents in charge of killing her and Paul begin to fight over her

survives the death of Leto and transforms into a powerful prophetess at the end of Part II.

### *Dune, Doubling, and Ambiguity*

Jessica's ambiguous role as Clytemnestra-turned-Cassandra, is one illustrative example of a narrative strategy Herbert uses throughout *Dune*. As Alejandro Jodorowsky observes in the documentary *Jodorowsky's Dune*, the first few hundred pages of *Dune* unpack through insinuation: readers are rarely told information directly, and characters frequently withhold their full intentions in both conversation and internal thoughts.<sup>53</sup> "Doubling" in particular is a central technique Herbert uses to insinuate and produce ambiguity in the narrative. The traitorous Dr. Wellington Yueh is a double agent, working for and against both the Atreides and Harkonnens. Jessica describes Duke Leto as "really two men" (*Dune* 65) whose cold and calculating political strategies produce ambiguity in their relationship. The planetologist Kynes is secretly a Fremen leader known as "Liet," whom Baron Harkonnen rightly suspects of "playing a double game" (*Dune* 231). Although the third-person narrator always refers to Paul Atreides as "Paul," other characters variously call him by a second title, such as Kwisatz Haderach, Muad'Dib ("Mouse"), Lisan Al-Gaib ("Voice from the Outer World"), or Mahdi ("The One Who Will Lead Us to Paradise").

This use of doubling to produce ambiguity, create suspense, and insinuate possible outcomes is also a central strategy in the *Oresteia*, and, I argue, may be one of the crucial strategies Herbert borrows from Aeschylus. Doubling language and imagery pervades the *Oresteia*.<sup>54</sup> One Greek adjective found in the

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(*Dune* 170). In a moment perhaps evoking both Ajax's speech in the *Iliad* (9.636–8) and Herodotus' *Histories* (1.1–5), Jessica asks "Is any woman worth fighting over?"

53 Consider for example the dialogue between Jessica and Dr. Yueh (*Dune* 57–65), during which both characters manipulate speech protocols in order to withhold information or force the other to reveal information. Even their internal thoughts conceal rather than reveal: [Dr. Yueh:] "*If only there were some way not to do this thing that I must do*"; [Jessica:] "*All the time we talked he was hiding something, holding something back ...*" (*Dune* 65, Herbert's italics).

54 Examples: the "double, warlike Atreides" (δισσοὺς / Ἀτρεΐδης μαχίμους, *Ag.* 122–3) in the parodos; the Herald's proclamation that "the sons of Priam paid twofold penalties" (διπλᾶ δ' ἔτεισαν Πριαμίδαι θάμάρτια, *Ag.* 537); the "double whip, which Ares loves" that killed Achaean soldiers on their voyage home (διπλῇ μάστιγι, τὴν Ἄρης φιλεῖ, *Ag.* 642); the evil-minded arrow that "doubles grief" (ἄχθος διπλοῖζει, *Ag.* 835); the "double lash" (διπλῆς γὰρ τῆσδε μαράγγης, *Cho.* 375) of revenge from Orestes and Electra; the "twofold handiworks" of the Nurse for baby Orestes (διπλᾶς δὲ τάσδε χειρωναξίας, *Cho.* 761); the two tyrants

*Oresteia*, ἀμφίλεκτος (“spoken both ways”), is of particular interest, since its semantic range includes “doubtful” and “questioned”—that is, something that is “spoken doubly” so as to produce ambiguity or doubt.<sup>55</sup> Clytemnestra tells the returning Agamemnon that she sent Orestes away since their ally Strophius was “warning me of double [doubtful?] tragedies” (ἀμφίλεκτα πήματα ἐμοὶ προφωνῶν, *Ag.* 881) for the House of Atreus. At the end of *Agamemnon*, Aegisthus claims that Atreus was “disputed in power” (ἀμφίλεκτος ὦν κράτει, *Ag.* 1585) when he drove Thyestes out of Argos. In both instances, *amphilektos* is used to describe not just a doubling or ambiguity, but specifically a doubling/ambiguity that threatens the current ruling house.<sup>56</sup> More broadly, speeches laden with double-meaning and ambiguity haunt the *Agamemnon*, including: the Watchman’s speech in the prologue (1–39); the Chorus’ long parodos with the account of the bird omen at Aulis and Chalcas’ interpretation (40–257, esp. 109–157); the ambivalent speeches of Clytemnestra that both conceal and reveal her intentions (e.g., 320–350, 588–614, 855–913); and the riddling prophetic speech of Cassandra (especially the exchange with the Chorus at 1072–1177). *Dune* then relies on a narrative strategy that, like Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*, is *amphilektos* in both senses of the word, both “doubling” (since characters resonate with two possible Aeschylean analogues) and “ambiguous” (since information is often presented incompletely). In other words, while I do not mean to claim here that Frank Herbert read Aeschylus in Greek or even read Greek at all, I do wish to argue that Herbert uses this *amphilektos* strategy throughout *Dune* in order to create suspense and indicate the fragility of political regimes, and to posit that Herbert likely derives this technique from Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*.

This *amphilektos* strategy appears even in the names of both Paul and his father. The name of Paul’s father, Leto Atreides, not only evokes the myth of the House of Atreus but also the goddess Leto, mother of the gods Apollo and Artemis. The analogy between Duke Leto and the goddess Leto in turn produces two equivalences, between Paul and Apollo and between Alia and Artemis. This equivalence may foreshadow Paul’s formidable abilities in both prophecy

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(δισσοῖς, *Cho.* 867) whom Orestes alone (μόνος ... Ὀρέστης) must dispatch (cf. τὴν διπλὴν τυραννίδα, *Cho.* 972); the lamentation of “double misfortunes” (συμφορὰς διπλῆς, *Ag.* 325; συμφορὰν διπλὴν, *Cho.* 931); and, on a positive note, the Furies’ final prayer for Pan to rear flocks “with double offspring” (μῆλ’ ἄ τ’ εὐθενοῦντα Πάν / ξὺν διπλοῖσιν ἐμβροῦις / τρέφοι, *Eum.* 943–5).

55 Liddell, Scott, et al. 1996, s. v. ἀμφίλεκτος.

56 So too does the messenger in *Seven Against Thebes* use *amphilektos* language to announce the deaths of Eteocles and Polyneices and thus signal the end of the Oedipids’ rule: “the children of Oedipus ... indeed have fallen in the dust not doubtfully” (Οἰδίπου γένος ... οὐδ’ ἀμφιλέκτως μὴν κατεσποδημένοι, 807, 809). Cf. Eur. *Phoe.* 500.

and combat, but gains added force when Paul receives a second name from the Fremmen, Muad'Dib ("the Mouse") for his ability to survive in the desert.<sup>57</sup> Here Herbert may be evoking Apollo in his guise as Apollo Smintheus ("the Mouse" or "Mouse-Killer") with particular reference to Apollo's ability to bring plague upon his enemies, as he does at the request of the priest Chryses in *Iliad* 1 or by urging Orestes to murder Aegisthus and Clytemnestra in the *Libation Bearers*. This double name for Paul / Muad'Dib thus anticipates not only his prophetic powers or eventual defeat of Feyd-Rautha in combat, but also the catastrophic jihad that Paul will bring upon the order of the Imperium.

### *Dune, Learning, and Prophecy*

This Aeschylean *amphilektos* strategy is also central to the concern throughout *Dune* with the reliability of knowledge gained through training and prophecy. Let us turn first to knowledge gained through training and learning. At the beginning of the novel, Paul meets Jessica's mentor, the Reverend Mother Gaius Helen Mohiam, who explains to him that, in the past, "men turned their thinking over to machines in the hope that this would set them free. But that only permitted other men with machines to enslave them" (*Dune* 11). In order to free men, "schools were set up to train **human** talents" (*Dune* 12, Herbert's emphasis). Thus training in the Imperium is not a widely shared practice among humans, but belongs to esoteric organizations (Mentats, the Bene Gesserit, the Spacing Guild) that cultivate humans according to particular disciplines (e.g., the Spacing Guild emphasizes pure mathematics, *Dune* 12). The first act of the novel then proceeds to explicate Paul's training at the hands of several mentors and in several disciplines: Duke Leto (in political rule); Lady Jessica (in the ways of the Bene Gesserit, including self-control, the Voice, and "the minutiae of observation," *Dune* 5); Thufir Hawat (in Mentat capabilities); Gurney Halleck (in combat tactics and music); and Dr. Yueh (in history and other academic lessons). This training, then, is what makes Paul human. As Princess Irulan writes in "The Humanity of Muad'Dib,"<sup>58</sup> "Muad'Dib learned rapidly because his first training was in **how to learn**" (*Dune* 65, my emphasis). In other words, *Dune* is a *Bildungsroman* or "education novel"—as it were, an

57 Cf. the entry on "Muad'Dib" (*Dune* 524).

58 Each chapter of *Dune* begins with an excerpt from an historical work written by Princess Irulan, daughter of Emperor Shaddam IV and Paul's future wife. These excerpts are composed in the novel's future, after the events that take place in *Dune*, and thereby offer the reader a (future) commentary reflecting back on the (past) events of the main (reader's present) narrative.

sf *Cyropaideia* (*Paulopaideia*?)—detailing the development of a “free” human atop a rigid, overdetermined caste.

However, the education that takes place in *Dune* borrows heavily from two specifically Aeschylean principles from the *Oresteia*: “learning by experience/suffering” (*pathei mathos*) and unlearning. Both of these principles are established in *Agamemnon* by the Chorus of Argive Elders and are important throughout the *Oresteia*. In the “Hymn to Zeus” (*Ag.* 160–83) during the long parodos (40–257), the Chorus claim that Zeus is “he who set mortals on the road to good sense, he who has established that it is learning by experience that holds authority” (τὸν φρονεῖν βροτοὺς ὁδῶ-/σαντα, τὸν πάθει μάθος/ θέντα κυρίως ἔχειν, 174–6); the Chorus express a variation of the sentiment at the end of the parodos, asserting that “Justice weighs out learning for those who have suffered” (Δίκη δὲ τοῖς μὲν παθοῦ-/σιν μαθεῖν ἐπιρρέπει, 250–1).<sup>59</sup> Later, when the Chorus offer an account of the fall of Troy, they sing that “the aged citadel of Priam, unlearning the marriage hymn, groans a mass dirge loudly” (μεταμανθάνουσα δ’ ὕμνον / Πριάμου πόλις γεραία / πολύθρηνον μέγα που στένει, 709–11), suggesting that unlearning is one part of learning through experience or, in this case, suffering. Thus we may say that the theory of learning in the *Oresteia* posits that learning is accompanied by experience, suffering, and, in some events, unlearning previous understanding.

This Aeschylean theory of learning permeates the education of Paul Atreides in *Dune*. As the novel progresses, Paul discovers the limits to each form of training he has previously received, such that he must unlearn previous lessons, revising his knowledge accordingly. After his first encounter with the Reverend Mother Gaius Helen Mohiam, Paul explains, “she said I had some unlearning to do ... A ruler must learn to persuade and not to compel” (*Dune* 31). Indeed, as Paul undergoes the transition from ducal heir (in Book I) to refugee (Book II) to prophet (Book III), he unlearns and reassesses much of what he has been taught, such that “his first collisions with Arrakeen necessities were the true beginnings of his education” (*Dune* 339). This new learning comes not through formal training but instead through his experience and suffering: the death of his father Duke Leto, his survival in the desert, and his many trials among the Fremens. In a formulation that comes strikingly close to Aeschylus’ *pathei mathos*, Princess Irulan observes, “Muad’Dib knew that every experience carries its lesson” (*Dune* 66). Paul’s learning through suffering

59 For further discussions of the history of interpretation on *pathei mathos* and the “Hymn to Zeus,” see Fraenkel 1950, ii.99–114; Smith 1980, ix, 21–3; Bollack 1981, ii.197–248, esp. 223–8, 245–7; and Raeburn and Thomas 2011, 86–7, 95–6. Also useful are the interpretations of Lebeck 1971, 25–6; Gagarin 1976, 139–50; and Clinton 1979.



in the novel culminates in a powerful *amphilektos* moment in the narrative: his "death" from drinking a drop of the Water of Life and the ensuing vision enabling him to plan his final assault upon the Harkonnens (*Dune* 437–47).<sup>60</sup>

Learning and unlearning may be thought to enable the cultivation of a free human in *Dune*, yet the novel's unrelenting focus on prophecy has the potential to complicate such freedom. As Paul, through his consumption of melange, gains gradual mastery over his powers of prescience, it becomes unclear where the boundaries lie between free choice and fated outcome. "Does the prophet see the future or does he see a line of weakness, a fault or cleavage that he may shatter with words or decisions," muses Princess Irulan midway through the novel (*Dune* 277). However, an *amphilektos* solution appears to be offered at the end of *Dune*. In the final chapter, Irulan writes "In the moment of his triumph, [Paul] saw the death prepared for him, yet he accepted the treachery" (*Dune* 466). Irulan's phrasing suggests that Paul's training and experience had prepared him to find the opportunities for free movement ("he accepted the treachery") within certain inevitable constraints ("death prepared for him").

At this nexus, then, between vision of the future and the freedom to act, Paul evokes two figures from the *Oresteia*: Cassandra and Orestes. In the case of Cassandra, her ability to see the future limits her freedom; as Simon Goldhill observes, "her perfect knowledge of the future, her power to express it in language, merely lead to the inescapability of her fate ... Cassandra's evident control over language and prediction brings not mastery but merely a powerful sense of the fated universe,"<sup>61</sup> though Goldhill perhaps downplays Cassandra's final act of volition, "accept[ing] the treachery" (as it were) and approaching her death of her own free will (*Ag.* 1313–5) and with a final prayer (1322–30). In contrast, Orestes lacks direct insight into the future, but is instructed in how to act by the prophecies of Apollo, then by the direct intervention of Apollo. Interestingly, Orestes quite literally calls Apollo his teacher; as Orestes tells Athena when he approaches her, "educated in evils ... I was ordered to speak by a wise teacher" (ἐγὼ διδάχθεις ἐν κακοῖς ... φωνεῖν ἐτάχθην πρὸς σοφοῦ διδασκάλου, *Eum.* 276, 279). From the perspective of prophecy in the *Oresteia*, then, Paul Atreides plays the double role of Cassandra and Orestes: a young male whose training and increasing access to prophecy prepare him to survive his departure from home, to choose his own death and the inescapability of

60 "And [Paul] lay as one dead, caught up in the revelation of the Water of Life, his being translated beyond the boundaries of time by the poison that gives life. Thus was the prophecy made true that Lisan al-Gaib might be both dead and alive" (*Dune* 437).

61 Goldhill 1986, 27–8.

betrayal, and to become a prophet (Apollo himself)—all as a means to his own political triumph.

### *Dune*, Speculative Fiction, and Aeschylus

I have suggested two different strategies for articulating a relationship between Frank Herbert's *Dune* and Aeschylus' *Oresteia*: on the one hand, reading both texts in terms of the particular theme of intergenerational dynastic violence in order to suggest that Aeschylus and Herbert both compose hero tales in tragic form; on the other hand, reading *Dune* as receiving from the *Oresteia* a number of narrative strategies with respect to names, *amphilektos* language, learning through suffering, and prophecy. However, the most important questions we asked at the beginning of this essay remain: What do we gain by reading *Dune* as a reception of the *Oresteia*? What might this tell us about speculative fiction or even Aeschylean drama?

On the one hand, both reading strategies stress that *Dune* and the *Oresteia* are narratives concerned with various forms of education and enculturation: rites of passage, technical training, and learning through experience. We speculated that *Dune* might even be a kind of *Bildungsroman* tracing the learning and unlearning of Paul Atreides. The SF critic Darko Suvin has argued that "much valid SF uses the plot structure of the "education novel," with its initially naive protagonist who by degrees arrives at some understanding of the *novum* for her/himself and for the readers."<sup>62</sup> The question thus becomes: if *Dune* is an "education novel," what is its *novum*, its cognitive innovation? We may be tempted at first to consider shiny technoscientific objects—ships capable of interstellar travel, lasguns, and Fremen stillsuits—but *Dune*'s most compelling *nova* may in fact be the ability to learn and the art of prescience (and the spice melange), for which Paul has been training throughout the entire narrative. As the novel progresses, Paul exhibits increasing abilities to observe subtle minutiae, do large-scale political modeling, and perceive possible futures—all of which converge when he drinks the Water of Life: when Jessica asks if Paul has seen the future, he replies, "Not the future ... I've seen the Now" (*Dune* 445). In other words, *Dune* is not so much a *science fiction* novel as a *knowledge fiction* novel, about the protagonist's ability to access and interpret knowledge that

62 Suvin 1979, 79. Here *novum* means a work's most significant conceptual difference or innovation from its present cognitive environment. On the *novum* in Suvin and its implication for classical reception studies, see Rogers and Stevens 2012, 136–8.

is alien to his present, cognitive environment. What makes Paul remarkable is that his facility at learning and access to knowledge are without rival in the novel.<sup>63</sup>

In turn, given their linguistic and thematic similarities, is it possible that learning and prophecy are two *nova* shared by both *Dune* and the *Oresteia*? Is the *Oresteia* a kind of knowledge fiction? It is not my intention here to raise more difficult questions about the precise status of Athenian education and the notion of learning in 458 BCE, for which evidence is fairly tenuous;<sup>64</sup> nevertheless, our reading of *Dune* might suggest that learning in the *Oresteia* cannot be treated as a given process to which all individuals have access, but rather is itself cultivated through extensive training and craft. In other words, rather than reading *pathei mathos* as gnomic or popular wisdom, it may be productive to read the *Oresteia* as a narrative about the difficulty of learning. Such an interpretation, however, needs to be tempered by the fact that Orestes, in contrast to Paul, does not appear an exceptional learner in any regard, but is subject to the same authoritative rule of *pathei mathos* laid down by Zeus for all mortals. Orestes does have exceptional access to prophetic knowledge through his teacher Apollo, although, as Yun Lee Too has demonstrated, teaching becomes a shared property of the demos later in *Eumenides*, re-allocated to the law courts where citizens "teach" one another.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, the *Oresteia* seems to present learning as more accessible to humankind than does *Dune*.

Our reading may demonstrate, then, that *Dune* is a deeply conservative novel that, despite the promise of technological advancement and inter-space travel, envisions a future not much different from the ancient past of the *Oresteia*, a future perhaps even more elitist. *Dune* is particularly conservative in its presentation of gender roles: such conservatism is not merely a product of Herbert using the Hero's Journey template (which excludes female actors),<sup>66</sup> but I would argue also derives from Herbert's particular use of the *Oresteia*. In the last section, I suggested that Paul, as the prophet who survives, plays analogue both to Cassandra and Orestes, but we might instead claim that Paul Atreides is an Orestes who, in his guise as Kwisatz Haderach (a male Cassandra), appropriates into his monarchical rule the feminine domain of

63 An exception to this may be the Count Fenring, "an-almost Kwisatz Haderach" and potential rival who declines to fight Paul at the novel's climax (*Dune* 497).

64 See (e.g.) Marrou 1956, Wise 1998, and Griffith 2001.

65 Too 2001.

66 Schmidt 2005, 74–80 discusses how the Hero's Journey template excludes female protagonists.

prophecy formerly controlled by the Bene Gesserit; this also resonates with Apollo, who, as the Pythia recounts (*Eum.* 1–33), receives his prophetic powers from a line of female mantics (Gaia, Themis, Phoebê). It is noteworthy that Paul never directly challenges the Spacing Guild, which controls the mathematically inclined (and presumably masculine?) domain of prescience so as to leave the economic strength of the Guild intact.

Finally, Paul's training in and appropriation of the skills from the Bene Gesserit, Fremen, and others return us to the question of *Dune's* complex multiculturalism (discussed in Section 1) and the larger implications of reading *Dune* in terms of classical reception. Elsewhere, in a broader discussion of SF and the classics, Benjamin Eldon Stevens and I argue that:

We therefore believe it is important for Classicists in particular to acknowledge that in more recent SF (as well as other genres) “the classics” have been transformed into something like “reliably esoteric, public-domain material for popular cultural ironization.” In this way “the classics” are being made into vivid signifiers neither of the ancient past, nor even of professional knowledge of antiquity, but of a present moment: an advanced postmodern moment marked by recomposition of past cultural products that is omnivorous and, from a scholarly perspective, generally uncritical. These “classics,” as it were cobbled and stitched together into a new monstrum, constitute an imagistically vivid but ontologically indistinct entry in an advanced postmodern encyclopedism that is, in its own view, not hierarchical but associative and, so, willfully apolitical about its cultural recompositions.<sup>67</sup>

*Dune* provides a particularly compelling test case for this claim. On one hand, the argument I have offered in Section 1 would seem to support this claim. *Dune's* multiculturalism is rather an absorption of several Others, reflecting not a professional knowledge of antiquity (or the European Middle Ages or Bedouin culture) but rather knowledge of popular narrative trends and formulae that contribute to an omnivorousness that is “generally uncritical,” an “indistinct entry in an advanced postmodern encyclopedism.” We might go further and say that *Dune* attempts not just to be a part of but rather to constitute its own “advanced postmodern encyclopedism” through Herbert's inclusion of four “appendixes,” a “Terminology of the Imperium,” cartographic notes, and a map (*Dune* 491–537)—not to mention the rest of the *Dune* series written by Frank Herbert, Brian Herbert and Kevin J. Anderson, or the series' congeners in

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67 Rogers and Stevens 2012, 131.

other media. In other words, if we read *Dune* as a *Bildungsroman* or knowledge fiction, it is not entirely clear what we learn or what specific knowledge or pre-science we gain; all we derive is skopophilic pleasure at identifying what we already know, mixed up into new forms.

On the other hand, the argument in Section II may suggest that *Dune* does receive from the *Oresteia* particular strategies for thinking about the ambiguous and unpredictable aspects of knowledge in a world fraught with religious, economic, and political uncertainty. As Paul learns to combine both technical skill and the lessons of experience—in other words, as Muad'Dib learns to survive and thus earns the sobriquet—we the reader also have the opportunity to discover the complex calculations of survivalism amidst upheaval and change in previously reliable structures. This may well be why the *Oresteia* has provided an attractive sounding board for works of speculative fiction like *Dune* and the *Harry Potter* series, with which I started this essay: in his narrative about intergenerational dynastic violence leading to the destruction of traditional social and political structures (the family, the *polis*, the ruling regime), Aeschylus offers a distinct perspective on learning and unlearning that encourages agents to let go of certain structures and institutions, to recognize prophetic signs, and to locate within the ambiguities of those signs the opportunities to survive. Perhaps this perspective may tell us something too about the Athenians on that spring day in 458 BCE.<sup>68</sup>

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## “Save Our City”: The Curious Absence of Aeschylus in Modern Political Thought

Arlene W. Saxonhouse

### Introduction: The Politics Of Aristophanes' *Frogs*

It is Euripides whom Dionysus initially pursues when he ventures into Hades in Aristophanes' *Frogs*. Concerned about the quality of the still-living poets whose works appear on his stage, Dionysus develops a deep longing for Euripides' verses and plots to bring Euripides back from Hades to Athens. Once he arrives in Hades, he discovers (as could only happen in an Aristophanic comedy) that a trial is to be held to determine whether Aeschylus should yield his position on the Throne of Tragedy to the recently arrived Euripides.<sup>1</sup> Dionysus, fortuitously having arrived just as the trial is about to begin, becomes the judge of the claims each tragic poet makes. Sophocles, unlike the combative Euripides, acknowledged Aeschylus' pre-eminence and withdrew from the contest. Aristophanic insults mark much of the contest between the two poets, but woven into the comedy is the portrayal of a Euripides who appeals to the *demos* as he educates them in democratic practices and an aristocratic Aeschylus still lingering among the warriors of a heroic age.

As the two poets present their cases, we hear that Euripides' plays are filled with lowly characters. Euripides says: “From the very first lines I wouldn't leave any character idle; I'd have the wife speak, and the slave just as much, and the master and the maiden and the old lady” (948–9). He praises his own openness, his inclusion of all popular types, his willingness to treat women as equal participants in his performances, and he defends himself: “I taught these people how to talk ... and how to apply subtle rules and square off their words. To think, to see, to understand, to be quick on their feet, to scheme, to see the bad in others, to think of all aspects of everything” (951–8). Euripides, in Aristophanes' fashioning, presents himself as giving the *demos* skills whereby they could participate in the city's decision-making, speak in the assembly and in the law courts, and defend themselves against those with wealth

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1 I use Henderson's translation and line numbers for the *Frogs* (2002). For an extended discussion of Aeschylus in comedy, see Rosenbloom this volume.

and training. Aristophanes' Euripides does so, he claims, "by staging everyday scenes, things we're used to, things we live with, that I wouldn't have got away with falsifying, because these spectators knew them as well as I and could have exposed my faulty art" (959–60).

By displaying before the Athenians people like themselves, "bringing them on stage," using language that they understand, and not the "bombastic bluster" of Aeschylus (962), Aristophanes' Euripides reiterates his point about teaching them how to participate in the city: "I encouraged these people to think, by putting rationality and critical thinking into my art, so that now they grasp and really understand everything, especially how to run their households better than they used to and how to keep an eye on things" (971–8). The democratic playwright teaches his audience to ask "Where'd that get to?" and "Who took that?" (978–9), questions that protect them against the "few best" who manage the *polis* for their own and not the city's benefit.

Notably, the foolish Dionysus sees the flip side of this "education": "Heavens yes, these days each and every Athenian comes home yelling at his slaves" (980). Whereas previously they would "sit there like dummies, gaping boobies, Simple Simon," now, they are a demanding lot, insisting on knowing "Where's the garlic from yesterday? Who's been nibbling the olives?" (984–92). The examples belong to the stuff of comedy, but behind the comedy is the suggestion that Euripides taught the many to demand explanations, to assert their interests and not foolishly accept the pillaging of their resources, whether by their own slaves or the politically powerful. Whether Euripides has had this effect is, for sure, unclear, but according to this comedy, Athens has become more democratic, more egalitarian, because of his plays. The causal connection seems clear to Aristophanes' Dionysus.

Aeschylus speaks in response. The Chorus recalls that he was "the first of the Greeks to rear towers of majestic utterance and adorn tragic rant" (1004–5). Aeschylus himself asks: "For what qualities should a poet be admired?" (1008); Euripides, expanding his view of poetry's didactic role in the life of the city, responds: "Skill and good counsel, and because we make people better members of their communities (ὅτι βελτίους γε ποιοῦμεν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν; 1009–10). Against such claims, Aeschylus objects that Euripides has instead turned "good upstanding people into scoundrels" (1011) and transformed Aeschylus' "noble six-footers" into "civic shirkers, vulgarians, imps, and criminals." As Aeschylus says of his own characters, they have an "aura of spears, lances, white-crested helmets, green berets, greaves, and seven-ply oxhide hearts" (1014–7). This echo of the Homeric hero in Aeschylus' tragedies stands in sharp contrast to the lowly inhabitants of Euripides' plays. His heroes, Aeschylus asserts, encourage men to yearn for victory (1027); his

“profiles in courage” (1040) push the Athenians to emulate god-like characters. Contemptuous of Euripides’ tragedies, Aeschylus scoffs: “I certainly created no whores like Phaedra and Stheneboea, and no one can find a lustful woman in anything I ever composed” (1043–4). Aeschylus becomes the poet of war and nobility, Euripides the poet of Aphrodite, leading the Athenians to crave the softer, decadent pleasures. Euripides seems to understand democratic politics; Aristophanes’ Aeschylus harkens back to an age when politics was understood only as monarchies and war.

Aeschylus continues to defend his throne by justifying his own role as educator, explaining how he elevates the members of the audience; he re-iterates that the poet has “a special duty to conceal what is wicked and not stage it or teach it ... grownups have the poet [who instructs]. It’s very important that we tell them things that are good” (1053–6). Euripides objects: “It is necessary to speak in human language” (1058), but Aeschylus insists that the poet must speak in the lofty language appropriate to the demigods, “just as they wear much more impressive clothing than we do” (1061). As Dionysus had identified the consequences of teaching the many to “think” on social relations within the household when he reacted to Euripides’ claims, so now Aeschylus explains the harm of dressing “royals in rags” (1063): it makes the rich man unwilling to command a warship since he is happy to wrap himself in rags and claim to be poor. Euripides’ rag-attired heroes inhibit a longing to emulate Homeric heroes. “To cultivate chitchat and gab, which has emptied the wrestling schools and worn down the butts of young men as they gab away,” as Euripides does, Aeschylus protests has “prompted the crew of the *Paralus* to talk back to their officers.”<sup>2</sup> Those watching Aeschylus’ tragedies show respect, ask only for their rations, and are eager for the ship to sail (1069–73). They learn lessons in submission. Euripides’ audience becomes garrulous and insolent.

Dionysus intervenes here on the side of Aeschylus agreeing that because of Euripides’ plays, “Now they talk back and refuse to row, and the ship sails this way and that” (1076–7). Aeschylus’ lofty language and richly attired kings teach obedience and respect. The rag-infested egalitarian world where poetry reduces to the colloquialisms of Euripides’ plays fosters resistance to authority as everyone sees himself as equal to all the others. The consequence is sailing “this way and that,” the loss of guidelines, of the direction the ship (or city) should follow as defined by those noble creatures of Aeschylus’ plays. Without the hierarchies of the past, the city becomes a morass, in this view, of indecision

2 The *Paralus* was the name of a state trireme from the late fifth century whose crew was known for its strong opposition to the oligarchical coup of the Four Hundred in 411 BCE. See Thucydides 8.73–4.

and moral decline. Indeed, Aeschylus asks what evils *cannot* be attributed to Euripides: “Didn’t he show women procuring,/ and having babies in temples/ and sleeping with their brothers/ ... our community’s filled/ with ... clownish monkeys of politicians/ forever lying to the people” (1079–85).

As the contest proceeds the topics of dramatic staging, word coinage, linguistic parsimony all become fit subjects for dispute and at the end Dionysus initially demurs from favoring one poet over the other: “I’ll not judge between them ... one I consider a master, the other I enjoy” (1411–2). But when Pluto tells him that whomever he chooses will be allowed to return to Athens, Dionysus agrees to judge. Ignoring the poetic criteria of language and meter, he asks: “Whichever of you is prepared to offer the city/ some good advice, he’s the one I’ve decided to take back” (1420–1). In order to decide, he first asks: “Which of you has an opinion about/ Alcibiades. The city’s in travail about him” (1422–3). And when Dionysus cannot decide between Euripides’ “advice” that Alcibiades is “resourceful for himself, incompetent for the city” (1429) and Aeschylus’ that if a “lion-cub” is reared in the city, then one must “cater to its ways” (1432), he asks for another “good idea/ that you have about the salvation (*soteria*) of our city” (1435–6). Euripides suggests that the city “stop trusting the citizens we now trust/ and start making use of the citizens that now/ we don’t make use of” (1446–7), Aeschylus that the city should stop thinking of “the enemy’s country as their own,/ and their own as the enemy’s; and the fleet/ as their wealth” (1463–5). Much to Euripides’ chagrin, Dionysus selects Aeschylus to save the city. Pluto gives Aeschylus a fine send off: “Fare you well then, Aeschylus,/ and save our city/ with your fine counsels, and educate/ the thoughtless people; there are many of them” (1500–4). That Aeschylus promises to do.

Only in comedy would the god of the theater descend into Hades and return with a poet chosen to “save our city.”<sup>3</sup> More familiar in the literature is the irrelevance or deleterious effects on the moral life of the city of the tragedians. In the *Clouds*, Pheidippides, who has just beaten his father, scornfully dismisses Aeschylus’ poetry as “full of noise, incoherent, wordy, bombastic” (1367),<sup>4</sup> and then praises—to his father’s dismay—Euripides’ poetry. Plato’s Socrates notoriously exiles the tragedians from Callipolis. Yet, Aristophanes writes a comedy portraying Aeschylus as the *savoir* of the city and though the reasons presented in the comedy are meant to evoke laughter, Dionysus chooses Aeschylus over Euripides. In this, Aristophanes differs from political theorists, both ancient and modern, for whom Aeschylus’ plays may capture the power of poetic

3 I disagree with Redfield’s assertion: “The comic poet is looking for a new strength for politics, and he looks in the place he would naturally expect to find it, in tragedy,” 1962, 117.

4 West 1984 translation.

expression, the passions that drive human action, and the theological problems that confound humankind, but do not provide food for political analysis. Socrates excises what he finds problematic in Aeschylus (380a, 383b) lest it interfere with the education of the young. Among most political theorists who follow him, the language of benign neglect more adequately describes the attitude toward Aeschylus; he is neither savior nor corruptor nor a resource for reflection on the challenges and purposes of political community.<sup>5</sup>

Like Aristophanes, classicists have not been shy about reading Aeschylus with a view to politics, though not without controversy about how he should be read from this perspective. On one side there has been Aeschylus the political advisor to the city (à la Aristophanes) with scholars finding in his plays specific responses to the immediate issues confronting fifth-century Athens. Others read the performance of his plays as moving beyond the particularities of the political moment to larger questions of the development of political ideologies during that period. Recently, the classicist Elton T. E. Barker (2009) has approached ancient tragedy with a view to the theoretical questions of dissent as captured by the *agon*. While there are several highly suggestive references to Aeschylus, especially to the trial scene in the *Eumenides*, the two tragedies on which he focuses are the *Ajax* and the *Hecuba* rather than Aeschylus' plays.<sup>6</sup> But contemporary political theorists are a different breed and for them Aeschylus has barely just begun to surface as a resource for serious reflection on the central issues of political life; his plays have not been there to "save" a

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5 Aristotle, of course, takes Aeschylus seriously, but not in the *Politics*. See Munteanu, this volume.

6 Though hardly a comprehensive list of such works by classicists, one might look at Podlecki 1966; 1986; Stoessel 1952; E. R. Dodds 1973, which, despite a title "Morals and Politics in the *Oresteia*" that seems to promise a wide-ranging consideration of the work, focuses on specific political lessons the Athenians might draw from the trilogy and especially the *Eumenides*. C. W. MacLeod 1982 criticizes Dodds for this approach and reads the *Oresteia* in the context of Aristotelian moral and political thought. See also Barker 2009, 276 who sees in such studies as Podlecki's "the limitations of ... direct political referencing." Goldhill's 2000 article captures the rich debates about the ideologies of the classical world by drawing heavily on the *Oresteia*. And Zeitlin, especially 1978, brings to Aeschylus feminist concerns. In a revealing remark prefacing to a 2007 republication of his article on Aeschylus' Danaid Trilogy, Burian notes the different climate from when his article appeared 30 years earlier: "The most obvious thing to say ... is that no one writing such a piece today would be apologetic about politics as a tragic subject. The intervening years have been marked by persistent and productive scholarly engagement with the relationship between Athenian theater and civic democratic ideology" (2007, 199). Burian's chronology accords with a major shift in the acknowledgment of Aeschylus' potential as a resource for political theorists.

particular city, or, more relevant, to give insights to the general concerns of the possibilities, foundations, limits of the assorted political communities in which we find ourselves. Mostly, prior to a relatively recent period, Aeschylus has been strikingly absent given how rich his plays are for concerns central to the study of political theory. He has been largely overshadowed, I shall argue, not by his opponent in the Hades of Aristophanes' comedy, but by the retiring and deferential (at least in the *Frogs*) Sophocles. Sophocles' *Antigone* has appealed to thinkers in the modern world where politics has been understood since John Locke in the 17th century as a law-bound practice.<sup>7</sup> Aeschylus, engaged in questions that did not necessarily derive from law, in questions of foundation that did not begin in contract, in questions of justice that transcended generations, was left in obscurity by the political theorist. Only when the study of political theory and the questions such theorists asked changed does Aeschylus begin to come into his own in the field of political theory. To develop this argument, I need to offer a brief excursus on what we mean by political theory and its practice within the discipline of political science.<sup>8</sup>

### Excursus on the Field of Political Theory

Political theory today is an artificial construct that lacks an independent identity, caught as it is in a crossroads of a multitude of disciplines drawing from philosophy, history, sociology, literary studies, linguistics, and more. Just one part of the contemporary field focuses on the analysis of political theory texts, with some concerned with the texts as tracing a history of political thought, others with texts as embedded in the discourse of the times (the so-called Cambridge School), and others with the texts as resources to reflect on the fundamental questions and concepts with which political theory deals: the role of justice, legitimacy, equality, freedom in the life of political communities. But which texts deserve study and which address the questions political theorists ask? John Gunnell in a series of provocative articles published beginning in 1978 denied that the conventional chronology of texts including such authors

7 Locke's *Second Treatise on Civil Government* articulates the modern liberal view of political power as the "right of making laws, with penalties of death, and consequently all less penalties, for the regulating and preserving of property ... and in the defense of the commonwealth from foreign injury, and all this only for the public good." II.1.3.

8 This story will be largely US-focused, where political theory resides in the discipline of political science, unlike Great Britain where political theory more frequently finds its home amongst historians.

a Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau was anything more than a “myth” constructed to create a historical narrative by theorists with particular agendas. For Gunnell this entailed in particular an attack on the writings and thought of Leo Strauss.<sup>9</sup> From a different perspective but leading to a similar conclusion, Connel Condren argued that the works that might constitute such a mythical tradition gained their status as “great works” simply by chance.<sup>10</sup>

Whether a tradition of identifiable primary texts in political theory was ideologically constructed in the 20th century or emerged by chance, when one studied “government” in American institutions of higher learning during the 18th and 19th centuries, syllabi centered largely on reading what were then the standard texts in political theory: Aristotle, Grotius, Locke, Rousseau. After the mid-19th century, in response to exposure to Hegel resulting from academic sojourns in Germany, Hegel and texts on constitutional theory joined the list. At the beginning of the twentieth century a major change occurred in how one studied politics. Attention turned to the systematic examination of administration, bureaucracy and, with the rising sophistication in the collection and then statistical manipulation of data, political behavior. With this intellectual transformation, the study of the traditional political theory texts lost its priority and became a sub-field within the discipline.<sup>11</sup>

The concept of a “canon” that defines the literature in any field, so offensive to Gunnell and Condren, that caused so much disruption in the great books debates of the 1980s and 1990s, may have its origins in the writings of Matthew Arnold who, drawing heavily on German authors concerned with character development in the young, turned to literature for moral education as a replacement of the Bible. What had been canonical in terms of Church doctrine becomes canonical in a secular literature that teaches the virtues of an emerging secular age. Reading literature was not merely illuminating; for Arnold speaking to 19th-century England, it becomes the source of our humanity. Such an understanding of the canon had no place in the developing approach to the study of politics as a value-free pursuit in the early 20th-century. Instead of focusing on reading Aristotle and Locke, the new sub-field of political theory was defined by textbooks that brought together a mishmash of writers on politics. George Sabine’s textbook *The History of Political Thought* was first published in 1937 and established how political theory was studied for

9 Gunnell 1978; see the response by Tarcov 1983.

10 Condren 1985.

11 For more detailed discussions of the discipline of political science see: Farr 1993; Saxonhouse 1983.



generations. Uninterested in texts as the source of education for the upright man or citizen, Sabine introduced his volume by noting that “theories of politics are themselves part of politics,” and by asserting that “they do not refer to an external reality but are produced as a normal part of the social milieu.” He thus made clear that the study had nothing to do with virtue, truth or moral education, much less insights into the normative status and meaning of the central concepts of political theory. As he describes his volume, it is a selection of authors who have interesting things to say about the political issues of their times and may, in turn, have influenced subsequent authors. No more than that.<sup>12</sup> They would not transform the reader, as Arnold envisioned, nor would they illuminate the political world beyond the times in which they were written. However arbitrary Sabine’s selection process may have been, it nevertheless has had a major role in defining the canon for the discipline. Seneca and Ambrose appear, John of Salisbury and Voltaire, John Knox and Thomas More, but not Aeschylus or Shakespeare.

One consequence of writing such a volume was that it was no longer necessary to read the primary texts; one could study political thought by reading descriptions of the writings of various thinkers and setting them into their historical context. Sabine writes his book on the presupposition that “political theory can hardly be said to be true. It contains ... certain judgments of fact or estimates of probability, which time proves perhaps to be objectively right or wrong ... it includes valuations and predilections, personal or collective, which distort the perception of fact.”<sup>13</sup> Such an approach to a history of political theory fit comfortably into the positivism that was beginning to control the larger discipline; if one had to study political theory as part of the discipline, seeing it as a mere statement of preferences would be acceptable. The texts were not serious resources for reflection about political life.<sup>14</sup>

Sheldon Wolin’s *Politics and Vision* appeared in 1960 as a sort of replacement for Sabine’s standard and widely accepted recordings of past political thought. Wolin read the works included in his volume as addressing the central “subject matter of political philosophy” which he judged to be “the attempt to render

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12 Sabine 1938, xi, vii.

13 Sabine 1938, vii.

14 Ebenstein’s textbook preferred including selections from the original sources rather than “commentary and critical analysis,” but he offered these selections as “providing aesthetic pleasure and enjoyment as well as intellectual challenge and stimulation” (1951, ix). Among those included to provide “aesthetic pleasure” were Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, and Freud, but no ancient playwright.

politics compatible with the requirements of order"<sup>15</sup> and he offered his book in the:

... belief that [the historical approach] represents the best method for understanding the preoccupations of political philosophy and its character as an intellectual enterprise [and] ... that an historical perspective is more effective in exposing the nature of our present predicaments; if it is not the source of political wisdom, it is at least the precondition.<sup>16</sup>

While Wolin includes brief notices for Saint-Simon, August Comte, Benjamin Franklin and Georges Sorel, among many others, no ancient tragedy appears. Quentin Skinner, considering a limited time frame, published his two-volume *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* in 1978, affirming the "Cambridge School's" arrival with its focus on the rhetorical role of political theory texts as contributions to the discourse of the times in which they were written. Skinner begins with the agenda of "offer[ing] an outline account of the principal texts of late medieval and early modern political thought," listing the authors he will treat. He explains his hope of "exemplify[ing] a particular way of approaching the study and interpretation of historical texts" by offering "a more realistic picture of how political thinking in all its various forms was in fact conducted in earlier periods."<sup>17</sup> Among the vast number of authors discussed, no playwright appears.

Leo Strauss, whom I will credit below with opening up the "canon," co-edited in 1963 the massive *History of Political Philosophy* that implicitly questioned the approach of Sabine and Wolin. The editors introduced the series of essays on individual authors from Thucydides to Dewey in the first edition, noting that they had "done their best to take political philosophy seriously, assuming throughout that the teachings of the great political philosophers are important not only historically, as phenomena about which we must learn if we wish to understand societies of the present and the past, but also as phenomena from which we must learn if we wish to understand those societies." Arguing that the philosophers they include raise questions that remain "alive in our society ... and ... that in order to understand any society, to analyze it with any depth, the

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15 Wolin 1960, 11.

16 Wolin 1960, v. Wolin neither replicates Sabine's approach nor foreshadows Skinner's Cambridge School. Ideas are the stars of his work; the insights they give are responses to, not as caused by, their milieus. As Wolin says, they are the preconditions of wisdom, if not wisdom itself. Such language is unimaginable in Sabine or Skinner.

17 Skinner 1978, ix–xi.

analyst must himself be exposed to those enduring questions.”<sup>18</sup> As with the others, no dramatist appears.

Given these approaches to political theory in the twentieth century (excepting Strauss’), it is not surprising that political theorists largely ignored the great artists of the Attic stage. This does not mean that writers and even political actors were unaware of the tragedians; rather, the tragedians might speak to them on an aesthetic, emotional or theological level, but they were not resources for addressing those enduring questions about the political world to which Strauss alludes. When a political leader such as Robert F. Kennedy quotes Aeschylus (“my favorite poet”) on the “pain that cannot forget” and the “wisdom that comes through the awful grace of God” in his speech on the night of the assassination of Martin Luther King, he does so on an emotional level, not to offer deep insights into the nature of politics. If an ancient tragedian appears in the writings of political theorists it is most likely to be Sophocles. Surprisingly, Sabine alone of the writers just discussed refers to two Athenian playwrights. First he quotes Antigone’s speech at length, using it as an example of “perhaps the first time that an artist exploited the conflict between a duty to human law and a duty to the law of God.” Second, he quotes a passage from Euripides’ *Ion* about how egalitarianism is at odds with conventional hierarchical distinctions.<sup>19</sup>

Amidst the enthusiasm for the Hellenic world that swept America following the Greek Wars of Independence during the 1820s and as the American polity replaced the republican fervor of the founding period with the democratic values that Americans traced to ancient Athens, the Greek literary corpus did surface as resources for this newly formed political consciousness.<sup>20</sup> Winterer explores this transformation in her book *The Culture of Classicism* and notes the interest among the writers of the mid-19th century in the ancient Greek playwrights: “They lauded the tragedians for mixing the political with the dramatic. Sophocles, after all, had been a general ... and Aeschylus had served in the Athenian army in the Persian Wars.”<sup>21</sup> This does little, though, to suggest any contribution to political theory. Even so, it was Sophocles, not Aeschylus who dominated any turn to ancient tragedy as politically relevant. Winterer alerts us, for example, to an anonymous 1852 article on “Recent Editions of the *Antigone* of Sophocles.” The author writes that the “ethical ground-work of this

18 Strauss 1987, xiii.

19 Sabine 1938, 29–30.

20 See Saxonhouse 1996, Chap. 1.

21 Winterer 2002, 94.

tragedy” is “unquestionably not far removed from that which keenly agitates the breasts of mankind,” by which he means:

... the antagonism between the duty of obedience to the positive ordinances of the constituted authority of the State, and the duty of obedience to that still higher law of religious and family piety, whose seat is not in the written parchment, but in the consciousness of men.<sup>22</sup>

A century after that article, the democratic theorist David Spitz, writing during the peak of McCarthyism, begins an article on “Democracy and the Problem of Civil Disobedience” in political science’s flagship journal, *The American Political Science Review* [APSR]: “If Sophocles were alive today to recast the dilemma of Antigone in contemporary, if less sanguine, terms, he might well seize on the problem of the citizen who refuses to answer questions put to him by a congressional investigating committee.”<sup>23</sup> Though we can find this peripheral use of Sophocles on occasion, even here the references are few. For Aeschylus, until recently, there are none.

### Absence and (Minimal) Presence in the Canon

Considering those authors who have made their way into the (perhaps “mythical”) canon that fill the books on the history of political thought since Sabine’s agenda-setting work, we find little engagement, with a few notable exceptions, with the ancient tragedies. We know that Hobbes translated *Medea* in his teens and Homer’s epics in his eighties, but it was not the ancient poets who drew his attention as he analyzed the structure and goals of the political world. It was Thucydides who initially played that role. It was, though, only a matter of time before Hobbes abandoned the ancient historian for the geometric method and the ancient authors never appear in his political works except for excoriation. So too with the other canonical authors of the seventeenth and eighteenth and, mostly, nineteenth centuries.

Karl Marx has been described as “being particularly fond of Aeschylus, Shakespeare, and Goethe.”<sup>24</sup> Yet, despite his recourse to Democritus in the development of his thinking about materialism, that fondness for the poets surfaces only infrequently. In the Introduction to the *Contribution to the Critique*,

<sup>22</sup> Anonymous 1952, 99.

<sup>23</sup> Spitz 1964, 386.

<sup>24</sup> Morris 2013, 22.

where Marx portrays the German regime as a mockery of the *ancient régime*, he does resort to the *Prometheus Bound*:

The last stage of a world-historical formation is comedy. The Greek gods, already once mortally wounded in Aeschylus' tragedy *Prometheus Bound*, had to endure a second death, a comic death, in Lucian's dialogues. Why should history proceed in this way? So that mankind shall separate itself *gladly* from its past.<sup>25</sup>

Aeschylus' play is a reference point, though, not a resource. Steiner remarks on an important challenge confronting Marx's understanding of the movement of history: Marx shared "with the whole of nineteenth-century high literacy and with the philosophic Idealism of his German generation the conviction that the achievements of ancient Greece stood unsurpassed." Yet, those achievements emerged from a social structure grounded in slavery and a primitive political and economic organization. The solution to this paradox, Steiner argues, is the "poignant *non sequitur*": the artistic production of ancient Greece came from the childhood of man and so the attraction of those works was one of "enlightened nostalgia."<sup>26</sup> While images of the wounded god might illuminate the philosophic claims, they did not resolve the questions of the modern world.

Well trained in the classical literature as the canonical authors of the 17th through the 19th centuries may have been, it was the historians and the philosophers who attracted their attention; the playwrights and especially Aeschylus did not provide the texts upon which they themselves mused—or urged their readers to muse. The grand exceptions to my generalization are, of course, Hegel and Nietzsche. It is an understatement to say that Hegel's political thought is far too complex to be summarized in a few sentences, but in addressing (in part) the tension between the public ethical life manifest in the state, the universal, and the particularized familial sphere of the individual, he calls on the *Oresteia* in an early work, *Natural Law* (1802). The *Eumenides* portrays for him the absorption of one into the other as the Erinyes become Eumenides and are incorporated into—yet remain distinct from—the universal ethical life of the city, enjoying "the sight of Athene enthroned on high on the Acropolis, and thereby be[ing] pacified."<sup>27</sup> According to Thibodeau, "the resolution Hegel found in the *Eumenides* ... constitutes the foundation on which Hegel develops his ethical and political philosophy that will find its

<sup>25</sup> Marx 1972, 57.

<sup>26</sup> Steiner 1984, 123.

<sup>27</sup> See especially Hegel 1975, 105–6.

definitive expression" in the *Philosophy of Right*.<sup>28</sup> Yet, as Steiner notes, Hegel's solution to this fundamental tension is found in the tragic hero's death that alone "can make intelligible (can bring about?) the unification of the riven nature or duplicity of gods when these are enmeshed and disseminated in mortal collision."<sup>29</sup> Steiner's point is that Hegel draws this conclusion from his reading of *Antigone*, not Aeschylus' *Eumenides* where the Furies are transformed, not sent to die.

Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* portrays the Dionysian and Apollonian tendencies at war (yet deeply implicated) with one another. Here, Aeschylean tragedy enacts the Dionysian role of "convinc[ing] us of the eternal delight of existence, but it insists" that we must "be prepared to face its painful dissolution. It forces us to gaze into the horror of individual existence, yet without being turned to stone by the vision." The Apollonian rational creature, the man of science, the optimist becomes the "jovial Alexandrian man" who threatens to transform the "Aeschylean man" and bear forth only trivialities. Aeschylus expresses the Dionysian music and spirit for which Nietzsche longs, but was vanquished by the anti-Dionysian tendencies that enter with Sophocles and Euripides, with their "increased emphasis on character portrayal and psychological subtlety." Though Aeschylus may stand behind the Dionysian temperament, it is Sophocles and Euripides whose "close affinity suffuse[s] the world." As Nietzsche expresses it: "The virtuous hero must henceforth be a dialectician; virtue and knowledge, belief and ethics, be necessarily demonstrably connected; Aeschylus' transcendental concept of justice be reduced to the brash and shallow principle of poetic justice with its regular *deus ex machina*."<sup>30</sup>

Although Aeschylus is part of the complex thought of Hegel and Nietzsche, he plays almost no role in the thought of the two leading German refugees of the mid-20th century, whose own education gave them a deep appreciation for and familiarity with the literature of ancient Greece, not to mention the works of Hegel and Nietzsche. Hannah Arendt who recalls the experience of democratic Athenians in her efforts to re-capture the importance of political life does not call on the ancient dramatic works, much less Aeschylus, to aid in her excavation of the political. As Euben notes in "Arendt's Hellenism": "Arendt has no sustained consideration of any Greek tragedy," despite the fact that "her discussion of politics and actions are suffused by the language and imagery of the theater." And while Euben argues that "reading Arendt through the lens of tragedy helps dramatize aspects of her Hellenism and thought as a whole,"

28 Thibodeau 2013, 57–8.

29 Steiner 1984, 27.

30 Nietzsche 1956, 102, 119, 106, 88–9.

providing a “ground by which to bring tragedy into dialogue with modernity and post-modernity,” Euben himself (like Arendt in *On Revolution*) chooses the Silenus quotation about the vanity of human existence from Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus*, not a passage from Aeschylus, as leading us into his investigation of the impact of ancient Greek thought on Arendt’s theoretical perspective.<sup>31</sup> It is the practice of drama with its public performance, not the content of the tragedies, that Euben shows Arendt developing. Euben drawing on Bernard Knox’s reading of *Oedipus* and looking for Arendt’s contribution to democratic theory sees Arendt asking: “The question of how one is to reconcile the agonism necessary for politics with the need for deliberation” and that this question “parallels the question of how one fits figures like *Oedipus*, who gave life meaning precisely by their excess, into a community of equals.”<sup>32</sup> The works of Aristophanes’ Aeschylus with his “noble six-footers” do not lend themselves to the challenge posed by the heroic figure in the democratic *polis*.

The classical world of ancient Greece weighed heavily in a very different way on the thought of another classically trained German Jewish refugee, Leo Strauss who, like Arendt, profoundly influenced 20th-century political thought. Though deeply immersed in the literature of the classical world, he makes little reference to Aeschylus much less engages with his tragedies as he does the works of the other ancient Greek authors. One citation to the playwright [to the *Septem* (lines 1071–72)] appears in his landmark *Natural Right and History*, in a footnote to a passage on the self-contradictory status of law caught between what serves the city and the opinions of many. The cite blends in with references to the *Hippias Minor*, *The Clouds*, *Minos*, and *Memorabilia*. Strauss’ influential *The City and Man* delves deeply into Aristotle, Plato and Thucydides with frequent allusions to other classical authors along the way; Aeschylus appears only insofar as Glaucon quotes him in the *Republic*. Strauss’ subtle reading of *Prometheus Bound* underlies his characteristically cryptic comment in his review of Havelock’s *The Liberal Temper in Greek Politics*, when he reminds us: “Zeus is so great that he cannot be understood, that he must appear as a cruel tyrant, before he has manifested himself,”<sup>33</sup> but Strauss does not follow through on this suggestive comment when considering the relation between theology, tyranny, and politics. Aeschylus may linger in the background, but he does not return to save the city.

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31 Euben 2000, 52–153.

32 Euben 2000, 161.

33 Strauss 1989, 42.

## The Transformation of a Field and an Emerging Presence

Although Strauss' return to classical thought centered largely upon Thucydides and the philosophers, his concern with what he (and Nietzsche) call "the problem of Socrates" brings him to authors who had been marginalized by political theorists: Xenophon and (perhaps surprisingly) Aristophanes. Strauss' *Socrates and Aristophanes*, with a chapter analyzing each of Aristophanes' comedies, appeared in 1966. Strauss made no apologies for studying Aristophanes as helping us understand the problem Socrates posed for political life. Rather, Strauss suggests that Aristophanes' Socrates in the *Clouds* serves "perhaps above all, the purpose of teaching justice—perhaps of defending justice against Socrates' attack on it by presenting Socrates as ridiculous."<sup>34</sup> Aristophanes' other comedies, then, become resources for exploring questions left open in the *Clouds*.<sup>35</sup> The door is now open for literary works to be studied as political theory texts without apology.<sup>36</sup>

Two decades after *Socrates and Aristophanes*, Euben's edited volume *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory* appeared, sporting a provocative title that juxtaposed terms not previously joined. Concerned with the "crisis of American culture" and the "parallel crisis in political theory," Euben argued that Greek tragedy is "analogous" to theoretical activity, maintaining that reading it "can qualitatively expand the 'political agenda,' bringing before the public issues, such as mortality, madness, piety, and passions, that are usually consigned to specialists or private life."<sup>37</sup> Not only did Euben expand the agenda of political theory beyond a liberal law-directed focus, he expanded the canon as well. Still, there is no essay on Aeschylus.<sup>38</sup>

Insofar as dramatic works became acceptable objects of attention for political theorists, *Antigone* worked well for those addressing tensions between moral consciousness and legal authorities. The legacy of Hegel's reading of *Antigone* continued to resonate, while the figure of Antigone became a point

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34 Strauss 1966, 6.

35 Strauss 1966, 53.

36 The heavily Straussian journal *Interpretation* began publication in 1970; almost immediately it published articles on literary works. Shakespeare and Sophocles dominate; Aeschylus is virtually absent from the journal, except for a 1980 article by David Nichols. He reads the *Oresteia* as a cautionary tale about the violence at all cities' origins. By recalling that violence, humans will recognize the tentativeness of any lasting reconciliation with Erinyes who can always threaten the city with sterility (1980, 82–9).

37 Euben 1986, 1, 6.

38 This though Euben had published a piece on the *Oresteia* in the *APSR* in 1982. See below and Atkison/Balot this volume.



of departure for feminist political theorists.<sup>39</sup> But as the questions confronting political theorists moved from those of law, political obligation, or justice as a concept tied to law, Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, so filled with problems related to justice across time, recognition, political foundations, memory, and even the woman's position as a political actor, has begun to influence the work of slowly growing numbers of political theorists. At first it was just a trickle, and while not yet much more than that, awareness of Aeschylus' plays as illuminating the perennial questions of political theory has surfaced sporadically, though almost exclusively with reference to the *Oresteia* and mostly within the last fifteen years.<sup>40</sup>

Prior to the 21st century, two articles inflected by feminism considered the *Oresteia*. Euben's 1982 article spoke to the mutuality left unachieved in the *Oresteia* but which is necessarily entailed in justice. Euben also argued that Aeschylus educated the city by performing this mutuality before the Athenian citizens:

... insisting that men and women recognize their inevitable subjection to the contradictions of existence ... to understand their predicament and, through that understanding, find a strength of character[,] mind and action to sustain a distinctively human life.<sup>41</sup>

My own 1984 piece in *Women and Politics* suggested that readings of the trilogy that focused on capturing the movement from personalized individual revenge to political institutions ignored important familial relationships and how the trilogy highlighted the tension-laden relationship between city and family.<sup>42</sup> I hoped to capture Aeschylus alerting readers to what is lost with the suppression of the female, rather than exalting the victory of the polity over the family and of reason over passion.<sup>43</sup> Both Euben and I, responding in part to the impact of feminism in academia, were not searching for the historical women forgotten by the historians, but for how considerations of gender and

39 Early on there was the debate between Elshtain 1982 and Dietz 1985; also, Holland 1998; Butler 2000; Honig 2013.

40 Although see now Lockwood 2017 forthcoming on *Persians*.

41 Euben 1982, 33.

42 Saxonhouse 1984.

43 An additional article of mine on the *Septem* appeared in the APSR in 1986. I explored the *Septem* (and the *Antigone*) to examine how these plays illuminated the tragic downfall of male political leaders resulting in part from ignoring aspects of human life captured by the females of the plays. I believe this is the only article by a political theorist to consider the *Septem*. It serves as an early statement of Saxonhouse 1995, which also includes a discussion of the *Septem*.

family intruded on what had traditionally been conceived as the rational world of the male political actor. Aeschylus' works spoke to us powerfully on these issues.

Beyond the challenges posed by feminism, the new questions raised by Foucault, by post-modernism, by identity politics have all served to bring Aeschylus into the "canon." Danielle Allen's grand *The World of Prometheus* builds on the initial image of the *Prometheus Bound*. While she admits that punishment has been addressed by "every major political theorist since Plato," she also acknowledges that her work speaks directly to Foucault "who has powerfully altered the self-understanding of those who practice a liberal democratic politics." The *Oresteia* and the *Prometheus Bound* establish the framework that governs the rest of her work: that "punishment is a temporally extended drama situated within a larger institutional, social, and political context that mobilizes a society's conceptions about desert." Aeschylus' tragedies capture the relationship between punishment, anger, and revenge, as they play out in the creation of "a legitimate civic authority."<sup>44</sup> The debates between Habermas and Foucault motivate Chris Rocco's *Tragedy and Enlightenment*. Rocco turns to the ancient Greeks to work through the difficulties that confront a post-modern democratic world where enlightenment leads to domination. He includes a chapter on the *Oresteia* because that trilogy enables him to examine the tensions between democracy and the discipline it potentially engenders. Nevertheless, when Rocco appeals to Greek tragedy as a resource to "nourish the contemporary political imagination," it is primarily Sophocles to whom he turns.<sup>45</sup>

Patchan Markell's *Bound by Recognition* from 2003 concludes by expressing some surprise that perhaps it was Aeschylus rather than Sophocles to whom he might have resorted for his exploration of recognition. Markell begins by acknowledging that "the theme of recognition has become particularly prominent in social and political theory over the last decade and a half" due to the rising issues concerning ethnicity, gender, race, sexuality—what we can summarize as "identity"—which in turn has brought political theorists back to Hegel. Markell proposes to explore the irony of the search for recognition that

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44 Allen 2000, 16, 34, 36.

45 Rocco 1997, 137, 182. Though Rocco introduces Aeschylus into his work as few others at the time did, he concludes his book by drawing analogies between the themes of the ancient tragedians, Sophocles and Aeschylus, and Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, a centerpiece of the work from the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. However, his analysis never suggests that Adorno and Horkheimer drew from Aeschylus (or the other tragedians) in writing their book.

“may help to sustain some of the forms of injustice that many proponents of recognition rightly aim to overcome” and he does so by addressing contemporary theorists of recognition, but he also relies heavily on Hegel’s reading of *Antigone*. Yet, at the end of his book, he includes an “Afterword” in which he explains that while he was writing his book, he found himself reading and re-reading the *Oresteia*, becoming aware of how much debates about identity resonated with that trilogy’s “passionate tribalism versus sober citizenship, fragmentation versus common purpose ... *pluribus* versus *unum*.”<sup>46</sup> Seeing productions of the *Oresteia* led to a deeper development of conclusions he had drawn from the *Antigone* concerning the restraints that come along with recognition. A picture of a bound Fury from a production of the *Oresteia* he had seen graces the book cover.

The challenges posed by “historic injustice” done to Holocaust victims, to victims of genocide in Rwanda, to slaves in the American south, led William Booth to the *Oresteia* for help in “framing [his] argument” about importance of the “absent dead” for “doing justice.”<sup>47</sup> And, most recently, Elizabeth Markovits, concerned with justice across time, motivated in part by the environmental movement, asks, “What do those living in a democracy owe future citizens?”<sup>48</sup> Studying the characters of the *Oresteia* and setting the trilogy in the context of a democratic polity, she argues that the intergenerational relationships of the work give voice to the tensions between democratic freedom and the binding responsibility of democratic decision-making.

## Conclusion

In most ways, political theorists have not embraced Aeschylus as they have *Antigone*. Aeschylus’ plays, with their evocative language and their unfamiliar dramatic structures, seem more alien in modern times than Sophocles’ plays. Yet, as the subfield of political theory re-defines itself, both in the questions and themes addressed and in the texts considered, Aeschylus’ works—though almost exclusively the *Oresteia*<sup>49</sup>—become more than antique productions fit

46 Markell, 2003, 2, 3, 190.

47 Booth 2011, 754. Instead of the usual tables and graphs that accompany articles in the APSR, a photo of a Lucanian vase interpreting the *Eumenides* appears with the article. Aeschylus is “present” in Booth’s earlier APSR article (2001) on justice and memory, but does not “help” to frame the argument.

48 Markovits 2009, 427.

49 See also Atkinson-Balot, this volume.

for the dramatic stage; they become rich explorations of the tensions inherent in analyses of justice, of sexual politics, of memory, of political foundations, that can help us reflect on the challenges posed by the politics within which we live. In Aristophanes it was the ridiculous Dionysus who brought Aeschylus back to save the city. Today, it is the hopefully somewhat less ridiculous political theorists who will resurrect Aeschylean tragedy. He may not exactly save the city (as Aristophanes' Aeschylus could not do either), but perhaps his tragedies will enable us to grapple more deeply with the challenges confronting the political communities in which we live.

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# Political Theory in Aeschylean Drama: Ancient Themes and their Contemporary Reception

Larissa Atkison and Ryan K. Balot

## Introduction

The past thirty years have witnessed a surge of interest in the political thought of the Greek tragedians. Influenced by theorists such as Leo Strauss, Hannah Arendt, and Sheldon Wolin, scholars across disciplinary and methodological boundaries have turned to Greek tragedy with a view to reflecting on contemporary democratic politics. As the playwright whose themes are most consonant with the city's democratic ideology, Aeschylus has undoubtedly benefitted from this turn.<sup>1</sup>

Looking to Aeschylus and his contemporaries for clarity on political questions is not a new trend. References to Aeschylean drama and themes, most notably to *Prometheus Bound*, have populated philosophic and political discourse since the second half of the 18th century.<sup>2</sup> For Marx, Prometheus was the “most eminent saint and martyr in the philosophical calendar”;<sup>3</sup> and Hegel identified Aeschylus as a poet who wrote in the service of patriotism and national identity.<sup>4</sup> Nietzsche suggests that Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* demonstrates the perfect balance between creative power and the will to delusion, a tension that he interpreted against the backdrop of the Greeks' willingness to acknowledge that the world itself, on a cosmological level, is deeply unjust,<sup>5</sup> while for Heidegger, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Prometheus

1 See Goldhill 2000 and 2004 and Sommerstein 2010, esp. 303.

2 See Hall 2007, 179. See also Van Steen this volume.

3 Marx made this comment in an unpublished forward of his 1841 dissertation (See *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, I.31). He later depicted Prometheus as representative of humanity, “dwelling in light,” from which the worker is estranged (“Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.” In *The Marx Engels Reader*, 94).

4 Hegel, *Lectures on Aesthetics*, p. 275.

5 See Lecznar 2013 for a helpful discussion of Nietzsche's evolving reception of Aeschylus' Prometheus from the *Birth of Tragedy* to the *Gay Science*, where he comes to represent the naive Greeks as radically alien to the modern subject.

stood as the first example of philosophic defiance in the face of fate, a defiance that paradoxically helped him to cultivate a more adequate metaphysical orientation to fate.<sup>6</sup> By the mid-twentieth century, Promethean themes of humanistic triumph had started to wane, but Aeschylus' *Persians* had become a lightning rod for critical reflection on the West's military legacy and its global repercussions. Amidst a growing number of politically informed theatrical revivals of the play,<sup>7</sup> political thinkers across the ideological spectrum deployed Aeschylus to reflect on the West's military entanglements, both to affirm its victory over eastern autocracy<sup>8</sup> and to criticize its Orientalizing and imperial heritage.<sup>9</sup>

For all this longstanding engagement with Aeschylean themes, there has nevertheless been a marked shift in recent engagements with the poet. Political theorists are now, more than ever, speaking with one another across the boundaries of traditionally self-contained disciplines, such as Political Science, English, Classics, Philosophy, and Rhetoric. This cross-pollination has made disciplinary specialists of all sorts more alert to the relations among ideology, symbolic form, religious and civic ritual, and social norms, particularly as a feature of the democratic experience. These new levels and types of engagement have also shifted the way political theorists approach Athens and Aeschylus specifically. Less reliant on mid-century reconstructions of the *polis* as interpreted by Thucydides, Plato, and Aristotle, political theorists have expanded their canon and devoted more sustained attention to the political theory of Athens' great playwrights.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, heightened awareness of political exclusion and political remainders in democratic theory has led to a renewed interest in Athenian tragedy for its tellingly multivocal representation of otherwise excluded minorities.<sup>11</sup>

After briefly contextualizing the contemporary "turn to tragedy," this chapter will zero in on three related approaches to Greek tragedy influenced by these disciplinary shifts. The first approach, associated primarily with J. Peter Euben, treats the ancient *polis* as an exemplar for thinking more clearly about democratic politics then and now, in all of its productive tensions. This

6 "The Self-Assertion of the German University." See also Françoise Dastur 1999, 137.

7 For a thorough discussion of twentieth century adaptations of the play see Hall 2007 and Foley 2012.

8 See, for example, Hanson 2001.

9 See Said 1978 and Hall 1989. For a different view of the relationship of *Persians* to Athenians imperialism, see Kennedy 2013.

10 See Bassi and Euben 2010; Ober 2008, ix–xxi; Frank 2006. For a recent discussion of the way political theory as a discipline has shifted its engagement with Greek thought since the second half of the 20th century, see Kasimis 2015.

11 See especially Butler 2000, Honig 2013, and Balot and Atkison 2014.



orientation is indebted to, but also challenges, the images of Athens offered by Leo Strauss and Hannah Arendt, by collapsing their well-known distinctions between democratic politics and the philosophic life. The second orientation, taken up by Josiah Ober, Danielle Allen, and Ryan Balot, aims to construct a fine-grained contextual history of Athenian democracy, both by illuminating its guiding concepts and ideas, and, sometimes in a Foucaultian vein, by exposing its underlying structures of power and social “knowledge.” The third approach, exemplified in recent scholarship by Arlene Saxonhouse and Victoria Wohl, and inspired by Nicole Loraux’s pioneering study of tragic mourning, focuses on democratic exclusion, remainders, and the role of women. In tracing these three approaches, our goal is not to offer a comprehensive overview of Aeschylean interpretation, but rather to map out prominent trends in the theoretical use of Aeschylean ideas and to ask what these trends say about our own democratic commitments and relationship to Athens.

### Contextualizing the Turn to Tragedy

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Leo Strauss, Hannah Arendt, and Sheldon Wolin looked to Athens for critical perspectives on the distinctive forms of democracy made possible by the liberal traditions of modernity. In this context, all three thinkers invoked the Athenian *polis* as the antipode to the modern liberal state. While these thinkers were driven by remarkably different political motivations, they were united in the perception that Athens was divided between democratic politics on the one hand and philosophical speculation on the other.<sup>12</sup>

Most invested in this tension was Strauss, who saw ancient politics as hostile to the philosophic life, a tension that was epitomized by the Athenian democracy’s execution of Socrates. Despite this hostility, however, Strauss maintained that the ancient conflict between politics and philosophy was healthier than the modern condition in which philosophers such as Hobbes, Descartes, Spinoza, and Locke had placed philosophical and scientific thought in the service of political power, technological advancement, economic growth, and the disciplining of religion. While ancient politics cultivated a civic ethos focused on the individual’s duty to sacrifice himself for the common good, philosophy aimed at the truth for its own sake and maintained a skeptical orientation toward political conventions. Returning to the ancients and highlighting the importance of this distinction not only offered a potentially attractive alternative to the confused hedonism of liberal culture, but also helped to show that

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12 See Kasimis 2015.

modernity's relativism, historicism, and overconfidence in scientific progress had obscured the philosopher's vocation and diminished the viability even of liberal democratic culture.<sup>13</sup>

Arendt, conversely, celebrated Athens' democracy for its emphasis on freedom, pluralism, and political action, and condemned the elitism and insularity of the philosophic life, as she interpreted it chiefly with reference to Plato. For Arendt, the Athenian *polis* was distinctive in its demand that all male citizens equally participate in and contribute to public life through speech and deed. She therefore resurrected the *polis* as an Archimedean vantage point from which modern liberals might gain a critical perspective on the peculiar features of liberal democracy, including, as Arendt saw it, the loss of public space and the ability to speak about and reflect on "things which we are nevertheless able to do."<sup>14</sup> Arendt attributed this loss to the rise of distinctively modern technical and scientific discourses, as well as to our increasing consumerism and emphasis on the richness of private life, rather than the life of public speech and political participation.

Closer to Arendt than Strauss, Wolin argued for a "fugitive" conception of democracy inspired by Athenian democratic practice in order to combat the "anti-democratic structure and norms characteristic of the dominant institutions of so-called advanced societies."<sup>15</sup> While Wolin was more tempered in his enthusiasm for the ancient *polis* than Arendt, he too aimed to retrieve the participatory features of the *polis* as a potential inspiration for modern democracy. Meanwhile, he traced the homogenizing and anti-democratic impulses within the West to the legacy of Platonic "categories of beauty, fixity, or harmony."<sup>16</sup>

The narratives of ancient Athens constructed by these postwar thinkers set the agenda for contemporary political theorists' engagement with Aeschylean political ideas. Since the last two decades of the twentieth century, scholars influenced by their approaches, but also by the contextual reconstructions of Athens advanced by French structuralists such as Jean-Pierre Vernant, and intellectual historians, such as Josiah Ober, began to pay closer attention to the religious rituals, social practices, and patterns of public speech that characterized democratic life. This shift led to the recovery of tragedy as a resource that brought together and held up to scrutiny many of the tensions and ambiguities

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13 See Strauss 1963, 1964, and 1989.

14 1998, 3.

15 2004, 604.

16 2004, 60.

highlighted by the postwar theorists.<sup>17</sup> Rather than seeing politics and philosophy, or the individual and the collective, as diametrically opposed, a new generation of political theorists began to ask whether they were more closely integrated in the Greek tragic theater. At the forefront of such efforts is J. Peter Euben, whose work on the *Persians* and *Oresteia* reclaimed Greek tragedy as a source of philosophic reflection and democratic renewal.

### The Salamis Moment and the Philosophic City

Within political theory, Euben's work is distinctive for challenging the polarization between philosophy and democratic politics. Instead of interpreting philosophy as immutably hostile to and victimized by popular authority, as Strauss had argued, Euben claimed that both democratic reflection and Socratic philosophy grew out of Athens' "Salamis moment"—that is, the occasion of Athens' great naval victory over Persia, which was memorialized by Aeschylus in the *Persians*, and which the Athenians represented as giving the city unprecedented military power and cultural authority within Greece.

What Euben calls the "Salamis legend" was inaugurated, he argued, by Aeschylus' representation of the Athenians' naval victory over the Persians in 480 BCE as both the cause and expression of the Athenians' emergent democratic success. Salamis symbolized the possibility that an entire democratic community—including the poor and non-aristocrats who predominated in the navy—would develop a more deliberate orientation to political life, based on political equality and collective effort. This victory gave the Athenian *demos*, including the poor, confidence to rule the city without aristocratic oversight. In an act of collective heroism, the Athenian *demos* recognized itself as, to quote the common ancient phrase, the "saviors of the city." As a result, they could justly claim a robust participatory role and significant political influence within the rapidly evolving democracy. The Salamis adventure required a special form of collective daring that both produced and helped to reinforce and strengthen the Athenians' democratic ethos. Euben located the origins of political theory in this collective daring:

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17 See Balot 2013 for another approach to the "rapprochement" between philosophy and politics. For a Straussian reading of tragedy that aligns the poet with Platonic philosophy, see Ahrens Dorf 2009. For a critique of the traditional reading of philosophy as anti-democratic and hostile to poetry and politics, see Salkever 1986; Monoson 2000; Frank 2005; Tarnopolsky 2010.

The victory at Salamis made political theory possible and necessary. It made theory possible insofar as the Athenian triumph and the subsequent legend enshrined a daring of mind and of action that regarded the world as susceptible to human design. It made it necessary insofar as the content of the Salamis legend was itself the cause of the unraveling evident at Melos.<sup>18</sup>

In Euben's understanding, Salamis led not only to the democratization of Athens, but also to the rise of political theory through figures, such as Socrates, who sought to reconcile the confidence and daring that Salamis inspired with critical self-reflection on Athens' own imperial ambitions. Euben argues that Socratic philosophy grew out of the democratic experience initiated by Salamis and by Aeschylus' influential interpretation of it: Socrates was a self-critical, deliberative Athenian citizen, who was capable of seeing how the conflicts present in Athens' contentious political life point beyond themselves to potentially deeper understandings and resolutions. Such an orientation to both deliberation and conflict grew out of the way Athenians collectively processed their victory at Salamis—a victory that contributed crucially to Athenian confidence in and critical self-awareness of their democratic ideals.<sup>19</sup>

Against Strauss' portrait of an antagonism between philosophic questioning and politics or political ideology, Euben argued that the discourse of Athenian democratic life made philosophy possible. Through continuously refashioning the Salamis story, the Athenians became philosophically minded in their very practices of democratic citizenship: "The Athenians are collective lawgivers, able to change who they are and so the world around them. They are also collective theorists. For the capacity to envision the world other than as it is and to reconstitute the world to realize that vision is the basic impulse behind what Sheldon Wolin has called epic political theory."<sup>20</sup>

The cultural memory of Salamis as a watershed in Athenian history was not, of course, exclusively the preserve of Aeschylean tragedy; it was reformulated within various literary genres, such as Herodotean historiography, and throughout the Athenians' popular ideology. Yet, as Euben shows, the playwright put his own distinctive stamp on this "legend" by illustrating so powerfully that Athenian democratic power and freedom were central to Athenian victory. Equally, according to Euben, the play provides a warning to Athenians that

18 1997, 85.

19 See also Balot 2013 and 2014.

20 Euben 1997, 79 citing Wolin 1970 and Wolin 1972. These themes are developed in Balot 2016.

power and freedom require “observance of those boundaries of life, place, and action violated by Xerxes.”<sup>21</sup> In Euben’s telling, it was left to Socrates to elaborate and redefine Athenian political virtues, in a fundamentally democratic and Aeschylean spirit, by resisting the tyrannical novelties put on display by the Athenians in episodes such as Thucydides’ Melian Dialogue.

Where Euben reads the *Persians* as a point of origin in the development of what would become Socratic philosophy, he reads the *Oresteia* as a “mediating vision in the debate” between the postmodern philosophy of Foucault and liberal humanism.<sup>22</sup> For Euben, while the *Persians* sets the stage for the evolution and even reconciliation of Athenian politics and philosophy, the *Oresteia* foreshadows the most prominent philosophical understandings of power, justice, and politics in the contemporary world. On the one hand, Euben finds that the trilogy anticipates Foucault’s distinctive form of postmodernism because it renders suspect the frequently unqualified admiration given to Athens’ establishment of rationalized, or “normalized,” political institutions (most notably in relation to gender and justice). On the other hand, it dramatizes the epochal transition from Agamemnon’s retributive Argos to Athena’s deliberative Athens and therefore reveals a “path of integration and of resolution hard won over many obstacles, long in coming, divine as well as human”<sup>23</sup> In its negotiation and integration of the “old, traditional, and inherited” with “what is young, new, innovative, and chosen”<sup>24</sup> the *Oresteia*, like Plato’s *Republic*, teaches that injustice is “a part masquerading as the whole.”<sup>25</sup> Justice, conversely, emerges as the ability to reconcile and sympathize with previously excluded ideas and to give due consideration to perspectives we are often inclined to dismiss, as Athena finally does with the Furies. This ability to engage in what Arendt calls “representative thinking,” to judge and “evaluate action” from a perspective other than our own, are all components of the Aeschylean political theory that Euben identifies.<sup>26</sup> Yet what is unique to the tragic perspective, as distinct from philosophy, is its ability to cultivate democratic wisdom through the recognition of and collective participation in “otherwise subjugated knowledges.”<sup>27</sup>

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21 1997, 71.

22 1990, 26. Euben is here paraphrasing William Connolly 1987, 107–8.

23 1990, 68.

24 1990, 75.

25 1990, 77.

26 1990, 81–82.

27 1990, 94.

In this way, the *Oresteia* captures not only the tensions and crises, as well as the ambiguous conceptions of justice, that emerged in Athens' democracy, but also the limits and possibilities inherent in contemporary democratic politics.<sup>28</sup> Many theorists have developed these ideas in provocative ways that respond to particular features of the contemporary democratic experience. For example, Elizabeth Markovitz argues that Aeschylus addresses significant lacunae in the liberal theories of Habermas and Rawls by educating Athenians (and, by extension, modern democrats) in the institutional designs and democratic sensibilities that would enable them to face questions of violence and injustice across generations.<sup>29</sup> Like Euben, she argues that "engaging with the *Oresteia* encourages the development of the capacities for deliberation and judgment necessary to negotiate the ineluctable tension between freedom and claims of necessity in democracy."<sup>30</sup> In the same spirit, Judith Swanson finds in *Prometheus Bound* a "dramatic ground for integration or reconciliation of the three perspectives of justice," namely justice as desert, justice as accountability, and divine justice.<sup>31</sup>

Martha Nussbaum, moreover, has found in Aeschylus an unadorned expression of the ancient Greeks' complex, non-reductive understanding of ethical conflict—an understanding that refuses to interpret ethical conflict as a simple matter of ignorance or an avoidable failure of social education or psychological development. Like Euben, Nussbaum finds in the *Agamemnon*, for example, "not so much a 'solution' to the 'problem of practical conflict' as an expression of the richness and depth of the problem itself," which draws its audiences' attention to irresolvable tensions rather than to attainable solutions.<sup>32</sup> Aeschylus can teach us the precise dimensions and the necessary intractability of questions that still haunt us. For Nussbaum, Aeschylus makes it clear that human beings intuitively appreciate healthy and unhealthy emotional responses; in presenting memorable examples of both, the playwright invites his audiences to make judgments on a character's goodness based on his "sympathetic responsiveness"<sup>33</sup> or lack thereof. Nussbaum broadens Euben's framework in order to focus on ethical psychology as well as cognitive processes. In these ways, building on Euben's efforts, political theorists now look to Aeschylean tragedy in order to uncover a window into Athenian ideas and practices of

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28 1982; 1990.

29 Markovitz 2009, 431.

30 2009, 428.

31 Swanson 1994–5, 216–46.

32 Nussbaum 2001, 49.

33 2001, 50.

justice, whereas Arendt and Strauss had once set their sights almost exclusively on canonical thinkers such as Thucydides, Plato, and Aristotle.

### Contextualizing Athens: Punishment, Authority, and Resistance

Where Euben's work aimed to challenge or even dissolve the opposition between democratic politics and Athenian philosophy articulated by Strauss and Arendt, other political theorists pursued lines of thought developed by French structural and post-structural thinkers. They did so, however, with a markedly historical orientation that synthesized French theory with contextualist traditions that arose in the Anglo-American world. Among many important figures, one of the most influential was Jean-Pierre Vernant, who argued that tragedy played an essential role in crystallizing and giving expression to the subterranean tensions in the emergent Athenian democracy. In Vernant's presentation, tragedy represented the culmination of a particular historical moment in which the "border zone" between man and god, aristocratic virtue and democratic ethos, individual and city, was blurred and the tensions between these forces amplified. Although Aeschylus was the most "optimistic" of the poets, and most enthusiastic about democracy's "victory over all forces from the past," he explored these themes, according to Vernant, in a spirit "full of anxiety even amid all the joy of the final apotheosis."<sup>34</sup> In this way he perfectly exemplifies Vernant's understanding of tragedy as a unique genre with "its own historical moment" wedged between the heroism and mythology of Homeric epic poetry and Athenian philosophy's self-conscious interrogation of democratic ideals.<sup>35</sup> Together with other prominent French structuralist thinkers such as Vidal-Naquet and Detienne, Vernant's treatment of tragedy did much to advance our understanding of Greek tragedy as an ambiguous and polyvalent medium, albeit one that was explicitly tied to the unique historical conditions of the developing Athenian democracy.

Other intellectual historians, however, have probed the connections between tragedy's central ideas and the norms and practices of the contemporary Athenian democracy. Almost paradoxically, though, they also rejected the stark distance from modern life implied by Vernant's "democratic moment," because they aspired to understand the Athenian tragic poets on their own terms and also as relevant interlocutors with whom to think about modern democratic experience. Josiah Ober and Barry Strauss paved the way for this

34 Vernant 1988, 33.

35 1988, 33.

avenue of research by examining the close connections between tragic rhetoric and the public speech of the Athenian Assembly and courts.<sup>36</sup> Once the study of the tragic theater had been brought into such close association with Athenian life, then the possibilities of discovering ideological, conceptual, and psychological links with Athenian practice presented themselves to a new generation of interdisciplinary historians and theorists.

In *The World of Prometheus*, for example, Danielle Allen synthesizes these trends and builds particularly upon Foucault's wide-ranging historical analyses of madness, sexuality, and punishment. For Allen, the key is that Foucault had exposed the connection between the proliferation of specialized discourses, on the one hand, and the circulation of power and socially constructed "knowledge," on the other. Building on Foucault's idea that punishment holds the key to a society's practices of both power and knowledge,<sup>37</sup> Allen attempts to "render audible" conceptual claims about punishment and desert inherent in the practice of Athenian democracy. But she views this task as more than merely historical; rather, doing intellectual history of this sort could help us to understand the "potential uses of this conversation for asking questions about modern democratic practice."<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, Allen investigates the ways in which ideas of punishment were produced, disseminated, and problematized in Athenian society, giving the Aeschylean theater a prominent role in these processes of circulation. Allen's discussion opens with and pivots around a close reading of the *Oresteia* and *Prometheus Bound*. Unlike other readers who have found in the *Oresteia* a triumphal narrative of progress from primitive forms of justice and punishment to law, Allen argues that the conceptual distinction between pre-political revenge and impartial, governmental punishment is flawed. Despite the apparently intuitive distinction between these terms in the *Oresteia*, this distinction "breaks down in face of the record,"<sup>39</sup> since our conception of the legitimacy of the Areopagus as a new, impartial body of judges rests not on "its use of law or on its dispassion but on divine mandate, collective judgment, male control, the use of a vote, and anger."<sup>40</sup>

Allen interprets the *Eumenides* as the story not of the transition from a primitive culture of revenge to a culture of institutionalized justice, but rather as an account of the process through which the Erinyes concede to Athena and the courts the legitimate authority to punish. What is crucial here, according

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36 Ober and Strauss 1990.

37 Allen 2001, 16.

38 2001, 11.

39 2001, 21.

40 2001, 23.



to Allen, is that the Erinyes' "acquiescence *makes* the authority itself."<sup>41</sup> The Erinyes' passion is not overcome in this negotiation but rather incorporated into the Areopagus' role as an authoritative institution rendering justice and, where necessary, punishment. Through its particular way of staging the incorporation of the Erinyes, the *Eumenides* shows that the distinction between revenge and authoritative punishment as constituted in Athenian society—a distinction that was critical to the legitimacy of Athenian democratic institutions—was the outcome of both persuasion and coercion, which established the uncontested finality of the Areopagus' judgments.

Likewise, Allen finds concerns with persuasion, coercion, legitimacy, and authoritative punishment dramatized in the *Prometheus Bound*. As she argues, "The drama is moved forward by strategic actors who contest one another's definitions of desert."<sup>42</sup> Like the *Eumenides*, *Prometheus Bound* teaches that establishing a punitive authority is a process in which actors negotiate power and desert against the background of competing conceptions of justice.<sup>43</sup> Does Prometheus deserve to be punished? And, if so, then what sort of punishment is appropriate? Such questions are evaluated by successive spectators and subjects of Zeus (Hephaestus, the Oceanids, Oceanus, and Io), who offer different perspectives on the legitimacy of Prometheus' challenge to Zeus' newly established authority—perspectives that lead to different opinions about the justice of his punishment. Allen focuses on the Oceanids as a particularly clear example of this process. Although initially sympathetic to Prometheus' complaints, and suspicious of Zeus' motives, the Oceanids eventually concede to Zeus' authority because they agree that Prometheus had "erred" in giving fire to mortals; they came to believe, upon reflection, that he had committed an injustice in doing so, for he thereby reduced the gap between mortals and immortals. Their agreement with Zeus' assessment of Prometheus' injustice and of an appropriate punishment lends legitimacy to Zeus' rule and makes his verdict in this case more conclusive than it would have been otherwise.

For Allen, the Aeschylean tragedies illuminate a distinctively Athenian approach to justice that relied not on the characteristically modern standards of judicial neutrality or objectivity, but rather on the citizens' own judgments of desert and social status—judgments that were believed to be legitimately informed both by cognitive reflections and by emotions such as anger and pity. In Allen's view, Aeschylus' tragedies performed a specific social function in the Athenian democracy, by enabling Athenians to contend effectively with the

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41 2001, 23.

42 2001, 34.

43 2001, 34.

“problem posed by the presence of a wrongdoer and the spread of anger in the community.”<sup>44</sup> They did so, in particular, by affirming the idea that no citizen had more right than another to act on anger or exact punishment. Through promoting the idea of civic equality and through advancing the citizens’ respect for Athens’ judicial institutions as final arbiters of justice, Aeschylus’ tragedies taught the Athenians that the city’s justice was both more just and more functional than the primitive justice staged in the theater.

Whereas the French scholars influenced by structuralism and anthropology saw Aeschylus’ theater as a historically contingent expression of political ambiguities, Allen’s archaeology of the Athenians’ ideals of punishment helped to expose a subterranean ideational landscape dotted with complex ideas of law, anger, citizenship, and punishment—ideas that “throw into relief the historical particularity of our current penal practices and our present thought about desert.”<sup>45</sup> Like Allen, but from a less Foucaultian perspective, Ryan Balot has also recreated a critical dialogue between ancient and modern democracy. Focusing on the Athenians’ self-consciously democratic ideals of courage, Balot pinpoints Aeschylus’ *Persians* as an early post-war contribution to the Athenians’ self-understanding as courageous citizens. Linking Aeschylean themes to ideals found in Athenian public (and particularly epitaphic) oratory, Balot maintains that the Athenians came to know themselves and their regime more fully through exploring the cultural distinctiveness of their own ideals—ideals such as political freedom, democratic equality and solidarity, and rational deliberation. The Athenians could both celebrate their successful enactment of these ideals, and their victory in the Persian Wars, and rigorously question the possible limitations of their own sense of justice. The Aeschylean theater, and specifically the *Persians*, provided a site for self-reflection at a period when Greek chauvinism and triumphalism predominated. Like Euben, albeit in a more contextualist spirit, Balot argues that the Aeschylean theater of self-knowledge already manifested the inclinations toward Socratic inquiry that arose in Athens’ developed democracy.<sup>46</sup>

### Reconstructing Reminders: Outsiders and the Feminine Other

Influenced by critical theory, by Derrida’s deconstructive approach, and by feminist philosophy and activism, democratic political theory has been

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44 2001, 95.

45 2001, 37.

46 See Balot 2014 and 2016.

increasingly attentive to the manifold problems of exclusion and political “remainders.” One of the pivotal works in bringing these concerns to bear on Greek tragic thought is Nicole Loraux’s *The Mourning Voice*, which argues for a trans-political reading of tragedy. Rather than seeing tragic texts as bound up in the city’s political ideology, as other contextualists have argued,<sup>47</sup> Loraux contends that the tragedies’ depiction of typically private and female topics such as suffering and mourning worked to “dissolve” the political identity of the citizen-male, inviting him to relate universally to the suffering of all mortals. In this way Loraux’s “mortalist humanism”<sup>48</sup> aimed to move beyond a historical analysis of the way rituals and practices functioned to constitute civic identity by showing that tragedy instead contested political binaries by “abolish[ing] the boundaries so carefully drawn in ancient Greece to define the communal and individual spheres.”<sup>49</sup> Loraux’s eclectic foundations owe much to the “French school” but hew more closely to civic practices and ideology, even as they encourage her to go beyond merely civic forms of identification. Building on Loraux’s work, contemporary theorists and feminist scholars have looked more closely at the marginalized role of Athenian women, metics,<sup>50</sup> and slaves, with a view to developing a strand of democratic theory that attends more explicitly to tragedy’s tendency both to reify existing power structures and to create a space (however imaginary) for listening to these silenced remainders in the city’s public life.<sup>51</sup>

A great deal of this contemporary attention to such questions has been directed at Sophocles’ *Antigone*,<sup>52</sup> probably the most famous Athenian depiction of female resistance. Aeschylus has, by contrast, traditionally been viewed as an androcentric playwright invested primarily in concepts such as manliness and war. Against this conception, Arlene Saxonhouse and Victoria Wohl offer compelling alternative accounts of women in Aeschylus.

Skeptical of readings that interpret the *Oresteia* as a triumphant celebration of the transition from chaos to order and from the blood revenge of the family to the legal and institutional order of the city, Arlene Saxonhouse sees Clytemnestra not as a villain but as a tragic remainder of the androcentric transition from heroic battlefield to democratic justice; her argument thereby revisits Vernant’s leading concept but places it into a provocative new

47 See Vernant 1988, 23–48.

48 See Honig, 2013, esp 147, for an agonistic critique of this approach.

49 2002, 89.

50 See Kasimis 2013 and Kennedy 2014.

51 See McClure 1999; Foley 2012; Balot and Atkison, 2014.

52 See especially Butler, 2000 and Honig 2013.

framework. Saxonhouse's sympathetic reading of Clytemnestra focuses on the necessity of her revenge from the perspective of maternal justice: the long absence of her husband and the murder of her daughter forced the wife-mother to adopt conventionally male characteristics such as cunning and violence in order to restore order to the household—that is, to make it whole again. To illustrate the underlying maternal forces in the *Agamemnon*, Saxonhouse draws her reader's attention to the image of eagles bereaving the loss of their young until "some celestial being hears their misery and sends the furies to avenge the death of their young" and of a lion cub which becomes aggressive when "ripped from its mother's breast."<sup>53</sup> Saxonhouse finds this sympathetic maternal imagery throughout the *Agamemnon*, although she shows that it is displaced by paternal imagery in the trilogy's subsequent dramas.

Accordingly, Saxonhouse argues that the victory of the androcentric Olympian perspective on justice in the *Eumenides* signals the triumph of an abstract conception of justice that aims to suppress the affective and generational ties of family. But Orestes' judicial victory does not make Aeschylus simply complicit in endorsing this shift. Rather, Aeschylus' depiction of the transition from one mode of justice to another demonstrates a recognition of the "myths, the gender-laden choices, the exclusions at the base of assertions of political order."<sup>54</sup> Similar to Euben and Allen, Saxonhouse finds in the trilogy significant resources of evaluation and self-criticism. Aeschylus does not in any way eulogize the transition to juridical justice or dismiss maternal rites; his sympathetic portrait of Clytemnestra stands as a qualified endorsement of the "foundational moments of political communities" that is at the same time attentive to the tragic remainders that threaten any naïve or celebratory civic memories.<sup>55</sup> Saxonhouse's reading of the *Oresteia* does not, then, "simply eulogize" the "victory of the city and the male over the family and the female";<sup>56</sup> rather, it insists on examining what is lost in the city's newly configured conception of justice. In this way, Saxonhouse would agree with Allen that Athena's suppression and then incorporation of the Eumenides result from the workings of power and the social construction of authority. Like Allen, she shows that citizens were invited by the tragedians to evaluate the manifestations of civic power involved in establishing judicial processes, but

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53 Saxonhouse 1984, 21.

54 Saxonhouse 1984, 30.

55 Saxonhouse 2009, 42.

56 Saxonhouse 1984, 29–30.

Saxonhouse emphasizes the need to reflect on the losses suffered when the city “assumes responsibility for giving to each his or her due.”<sup>57</sup>

In a similar vein, and yet one more indebted to French post-structuralism and anthropology, Victoria Wohl turns to tragedy in order to explore the “tragic exchange of women” as objects and commodities—an economy, she argues, that was staged in tragedy with “almost obsessive regularity,” as women were figured as “brides, captured as war-booty, given as gifts, won in competitions, stolen though rape, hoarded as treasures, bequeathed as inheritances, even offered as sacrifices to the gods.”<sup>58</sup> Yet tragedy’s representation of this economy of women does not, according to Wohl, simply reproduce the existing order. Rather, tragedy disrupts the normal process of exchange, as “something goes wrong,” often with catastrophic results.<sup>59</sup>

Among other tragedies, Wohl looks to *Agamemnon* in order to explore the play’s commodification of Helen and Iphigenia. Both women are represented as commodities that, in the end, surprisingly disrupt the male order they are intended to reinforce. Wohl’s treatment of their capacity to subvert social order is based on Marx’s theory of the commodity fetish, in which a rare object gains power over its owner, whose own sense of self-worth seems to depend on his relation to it.<sup>60</sup> Wohl interprets Helen as the exemplar of such a fetishized commodity, whose irreplaceable value mobilizes the disastrous trade of Iphigenia. Clytemnestra, on the other hand, turns Agamemnon into a discarded object, while Cassandra offers forgiveness and restores the moral economy of the play.

As Wohl shows throughout her intricate theoretical reading, tragedy’s representation of female exchange does not overtly support or criticize the economy it exposes. Rather, it “calls into question the social world it calls into being” and exposes its “fault lines” in order to “examine and reimagine it.”<sup>61</sup> In so doing it renders traditional conceptions of women as objects questionable and opens the entire subject to debate. But Wohl is also careful to point out tragedy’s complicity in reproducing and reaffirming the male economy it questions. Cassandra “repairs the psychic damage that has been shown to be the true return on a traffic in women.”<sup>62</sup> By extension, Wohl’s argument implies that it is misguided to celebrate Greek tragedy as consistent with liberal

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57 Saxonhouse 1984, 30.

58 Wohl 1998, xiv.

59 Wohl 1998, xiv.

60 Wohl 1998, 61.

61 Wohl 1998, xiv.

62 Wohl 1998, xiv.

democratic values, since to do so means seizing exclusively on the play's subversive message and overlooking its more overt endorsement of Athenian conceptions of power and gender. Wohl argues for a dynamic reading of the tragedy that is not forced to choose between these two extremes but rather sees them mutually woven into the drama's exploration of the exchange of women.

In another, more topical essay, Wohl expands upon these themes by considering Aeschylus' *Suppliants* in the context of Western democracy's imperialist exploitation of Afghan women's suffering for "the ends of militaristic U.S. foreign policy."<sup>63</sup> Since Aeschylus is "considered the progenitor of the tradition of the West's bad faith toward its Eastern Other,"<sup>64</sup> Wohl reexamines *Suppliants* in order to unsettle this reflexive appropriation of the poet. At the same time, she aims to recover a narrative of female supplication and power that western reception of the poet has "obscured."

His *Suppliant Women* deals head-on with the problems of representation—political and dramatic—of foreign woman. It stages the process by which incomprehensible alien women come to be represented as familiar through the narrative of suppliancy and salvation. It examines the stakes of this representation both for the women and the democratic state. It also indicates what this narrative obscures: a counter-narrative in which women are political agents and the subaltern does speak in its own—foreign, threatening—voice.<sup>65</sup>

Wohl's comparative analysis of Afghan women and *Suppliants* hinges on the opposition between the manly democratic saviour and the female suppliant. The traditional reading of the play tells a self-affirming story of "Greek men saving Egyptian women from Egyptian men."<sup>66</sup> The *polis* depicted in *Suppliants* is represented as paternalistic and anachronistically democratic. The citizens, although subject to a monarchy within the horizons of the play, vote to accept the suppliants, precipitating through this encounter with the other a transition to democratic practice. As Wohl puts it, "[I]t is as if Argos actually becomes a democracy in the course of deciding this crisis."<sup>67</sup> Wohl's reading therefore supports Balot's idea that the Aeschylean theater advances the democratic

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63 Wohl 2010, 410.

64 Wohl 2010, 411.

65 Wohl 2010, 411.

66 Wohl 2010, 422.

67 Wohl 2010, 424.

project of improving the citizens' self-knowledge, specifically with reference to the understanding and integration of "others."

Yet Wohl also draws our attention to another, even more important, dimension of the dramatic action. The *polis* may agree to accept these women, but it is unable to domesticate them fully. When their vow of chastity is endangered by the prospect of marriage, the women threaten to "inscribe" their Egyptian bodies on Greek temples. This move, as Wohl points out, would pollute the gods. Far from being wholly dependent on their male "saviors," the women turn out to be powerful actors and negotiators in their own right. Building on this thesis, Wohl offers a reconstruction of the rest of the lost trilogy in which "the state refuses or fails to protect" the virgin Danaids from the marriage they insisted on renouncing; as a result of this failure to protect their chastity, the women take up arms against their Athenian "saviors," demonstrating their willingness to protect themselves if "their plea(s)" as suppliants go "unheard."<sup>68</sup>

In Wohl's reconstruction, the Greeks' insistence on seeing the Danaids as vulnerable suppliants without voice or agency rendered them blind to the ferocity of the suppliants' vow of chastity. Their blinders led to their failure not only to protect the women but also to protect themselves from the women's wrath. The *Suppliants* thus complicates the self-serving narrative of "white men saving brown women from brown men," because it highlights the importance of hearing "the appeal of suppliant women in all of its subtlety and ambiguity, and to respond in a way that preserves difference without simply assimilating it to a worn-out narrative."<sup>69</sup> Wohl's reading of the *Suppliants* is designed to serve as a reminder to western democracies to listen to and to respect the agency of the foreign women they aim to protect. Wohl ends her reflection by asking, "What would it be to intervene so as to save the otherness of the Other?"<sup>70</sup> This question brings to mind the political problems associated with Orientalizing and appropriating the narratives of others, while underscoring the dangers of reception practices that exoticize, flatten, or domesticate Athens and its playwright for the purposes of affirming a stable, preconceived relationship between ancient and modern democracy.

In offering this warning, Wohl perhaps echoes a neglected idea of Bernard Williams, who hoped to "liberate the Greeks from patronizing misunderstandings of them"—a liberation that would, he proposed, "help to free us of misunderstandings of ourselves."<sup>71</sup> Williams' specific engagement with Aeschylus

68 2010, 428. For a complementary discussion of Aeschylus' subversive depiction of the Danaids see Kennedy 2014, 29–32, with references also to Bakewell 2013.

69 2010, 428.

70 2010; see also Williams 2008.

71 2008, 11.

highlights the tension between necessity and responsibility in *Agamemnon*. His central point is that, contrary to contemporary liberal-democratic ideology, human beings cannot assert free agency outside thickly constituted historical contexts and psychological histories. We become what we are without having much control over ourselves, and yet we are legitimately, somehow, called upon to take responsibility for ourselves and our actions. For Williams, Aeschylean tragedy presses to its breaking-point the peculiarly modern notion that we can find ways to live without conflict, shame, or necessity, that final or decisive resolutions are possible. Aeschylean drama brings to our attention the ways in which we have lost sight, partly knowingly, of the ethical complexity of our decisions. Along with the democratic and feminist theorists we have considered, Williams' line of thought suggests that Aeschylus reminds us, even if painfully, that our most important choices will almost inevitably produce tragic remainders.

### Conclusion

The history of Aeschylus' reception draws our attention to the relationship between Athens and the liberal-democratic ideals of modernity—a relationship evoked by Aeschylus' representation of democracy in its early growth and successes. Like the Athenian funeral orations, Aeschylean drama suggested that democracy was the best regime and that its citizens benefited from that regime's justice, rationality, and progressive political ideas. Modern writers have probed contemporary themes and questions in the company of Athens' great tragedian. These scholars also invite consideration of a plurality of voices that reflect a less celebratory perspective on ancient democratic culture and, by extension, on the contemporary liberal democracies that we now inhabit.

The more complex our engagement with Aeschylus and the more fully we appreciate the multiple voices and layers present in his writings, the more thoughtfully we can also grapple with the inner workings of democratic Athens, to which Aeschylus' drama, in all of its puzzling depths, contributed significantly. For Athenian democratic citizens, the Aeschylean dramatic world affirmed a democratic ideology that, as Simon Goldhill argues, was complex and flexible, just as the contemporary reception of Aeschylean drama has yielded varied, polyvalent, and often conflicting views of his dramatic texts. The playwright educated his fellow citizens, as the Greek tradition typically held<sup>72</sup>—yet not by teaching them conventional social or ethical lessons, so much as by furthering precisely the democratic citizens' own capacity to think

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72 See Aristophanes' *Frogs*, especially, and Rosenbloom and Saxonhouse this volume.



for themselves, independently, about the significance of their city in history. Through engaging with the dramas of their first great tragedian, the Athenians came to grips with the character of their shared way of life, as well as with the remainders produced by their political, military, and cultural achievements. In participating in this engaged civic culture, Aeschylus' plays were neither naïve nor unreflectively celebratory about the virtues and accomplishments of the Athenian democracy; nor were they unthinkingly critical or interrogatory. Instead, by encouraging audiences to ruminate on their own democratic ideals from perspectives both familiar and alien, Aeschylus invited his fellow citizens to expand their thinking without directing them to a strictly linear, unambiguous, patriotic, or subversive message.

Aeschylean political thought invites democratic audiences, ancient or modern, to think about democracy and its tensions, exclusions, and aspirations, without in any way containing its remainders, or prescribing its own reception. Understood in this way, Aeschylean tragedy helps us to think more deeply not only about our engagement with Athens, but also about the stability, dissemination, and examination of our own democratic ideals. If contemporary thought has helped to draw out the multivocal perspectives within Athenian democracy, Aeschylus continues to offer a multifocal lens through which to understand ourselves more clearly.

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